

**P A R S O N S**  
**H I S**  
**Christian Directory,**  
Being a Treatise of  
**Holy Resolution.**

**In Two Parts.**

Put into Modern English;

And now made Publick,  
For the Instruction of the Ignorant ;  
The Conviction of the Unbelieving ;  
The Awakning and Reclaiming the Vicious,  
And for  
Confirming the Religious in their Good Purposes.

**L O N D O N :**

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# THE PREFACE.

**T**HE Book, of which this is an Abridgment, hath obtained so just an Esteem in the World, for its Piety and Usefulness, that it will be needless to say any thing in commendation of it. And therefore the only thing I think incumbent upon me at present is, to account for the Alterations made in that form, under which it now appears to the Reader.

The very considerable Changes, which have happened to many of our Modern Languages, and particularly the great Improvements made in the English Tongue, within this last Century, are a mighty prejudice, even to the most valuable Things written before that time. No weight of Matter, or Beauty of Thought, is sufficient to procure them that good acceptance with the generality of Readers, which they would not fail to find, if dressed in a more modish Garb. And therefore the making such Writers speak, as if they had lived and conversed with us at this Day, (while the force and substance of what they say is preserved entire,) is so far from an Injury, that, I presume, it will be allowed a Kindness and Advantage. And this hath been attempted in the present Tract with due Fidelity, where the matter was esteemed either profitable, or necessary to the main Argument, and serving the Interests of True Religion, and a Good Life.

The only Difficulty seems to be, how I shall justify those Differences between this and some of the former Editions, where several Things are wholly omitted, and such as the Author, no doubt, thought very material to his

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*Design.* And here I shall make no scruple to declare wherein I have varied from him, and the Motives for my doing so: By no means despairing, that the Reasons, which perswaded me to make such Alterations, will prevail with others, who shall consider the Case without prejudice, not to disapprove them.

My general Intention of reducing the Christian Directory into a narrower compass, is, that it may be more suitable to the Memory and the Leisure of Vulgar Readers. And the effect hath so far answerd, that it is less by one Third than the Original Treatise. But then this Abbreviation hath not been made at all adventures, nor any one point, that I know of, rejected, which might be of Service for exciting Men to that Holy Resolution, proposed as the End of composing the whole. The Matters pass'd over being such, as seem'd either (1.) Superfluous, or (2.) Insufficient, or (3.) Erroneous. And consequently, nothing of the true weight is taken away by this proceeding, but the Argument remains more just, more unexceptionable, and more perfect, without them.

i. Under the First sort, I comprehend several Prophecies out of the Old Testament, which do either not at all, or in a very remote Sense, concern the Things, which this Author hath produced them in proof of: Several Quotations out of the ancient Fathers, the substance whereof is abundantly express'd in those which I have retained; Several Examples out of Ecclesiastical History, wherein the Virtues of Good, or the Punishments of Wicked and Obdurate, Men are represented. And here I have generally contented my self with such Instances of each kind, as the Holy Scriptures have set before us. And indeed under all these Heads, care hath been taken to lay down the most direct and significant Passages, after which the rest might very well be spared, and which, (if any Thing will)

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will ) might suffice for the Purposes that all of them were intended to serve.

2. To the Second may be referred those Testimonies in favour of the Christian Religion, which are taken from the Sibylline Oracles, and other Writings of suspected Credit. These I have but slightly mentioned, and so as to lay no particular stress upon them. It being a manifest injury to a Cause, which needs them not, when we produce Authorities justly questioned, where there is sufficient Proof, from such as are uncontestable, to support it against the Objections of any fair Adversary.

3. The Third are chiefly concerned in the Chapters of Faith, Good Works, and Purgatory; wherein the Doctrines of the Romish Infallibility; Satisfaction by Penance, and Atms; and the temporal Punishment of Sins whose Eternal Punishment is remitted, are treated of, according to the Principles of this Father, and his Society. And herein I have cast out what was peculiar to the Romish Communion, and reserved so much only as might be supposed to come from the Pen of a Christian Priest at large. This I foresee is like to give greatest offence to a sort of Persons, whose eagerness for a Party in Religion disposes them to resent it very heinously, that we should pretend to enjoy the Advantage of what makes for Christianity in common, without being content at the same time to swallow all that is interspersed for the Interest of some particular denomination of Christians. But I hope this will appear to be no unreasonable way of proceeding, when we have attended a little to the two following Arguments.

First, This Cavil seems to come very ungracefully from the Members of a Church, which hath given the Countenance of publick Authority to Indices Expurgatorii; Whose most eminent Champions have forged false, and press'd the true, Fathers into their Service,

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vice, by making some speak who never broke Silence, and others say what they never meant, for maintaining a Cause too feeble to stand upon the Basis of genuine and uncorrupted Writers. And there is a mighty difference, I take it, between modelling Antient and modern Authors; between making the One of a Party, and to vindicate Tenets which they knew nothing of, and the Other deliver only such Things as all Christians are unanimously agreed in. If F. Parsons do not speak here as a Papist, yet he is not made to speak as a Protestant; that is, he says only such Things, as suite a Good Christian at large, without engaging in such others, as distinguish him to be of any particular sort, and relate to controverted Points, foreign to Practical Religion, and too evidently destructive of it. This for the Persons objecting; and then,

Secondly, For the Objection it self, if this Author have acquitted himself well in these Doctrines of universal allowance and use, why should He be deprived of the Glory, or the World of the Benefit, of these, by separating the Gold from the Dross, and giving the Reader his Morality pure without the Allay of his Errours? I call them so, because they have been abundantly Proved so, by a great number of Treatises, unanswered, and I verily believe, unanswerable. And I leave them out, because it seems to me a Thing much to be wished, that They, who write for the Benefit of Religion and Christians in common, would confine themselves to those Heads of Faith and Practice plainly deducible from Scripture, without perplexing the Vulgar Reader with the contested points of particular Communions. This would render such Books of more general Advantage, and prejudice none against them, who are of a true Piety and Zeal, whatever their Education or Perswasion may have been, as to the less necessary and disputed Matters. And I am not sensible of any Thing contained here, that should give just scandal to  
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any Good Christian of what Seēt or Character soever.

It had been an easy, but I think, not so fair a way of proceeding, to have formed a general System of Faith and Manners, out of this Directory; and have offered it under another name. Nay there want not several Treatises of this nature composed by Protestants; Nor need we, God be thanked, have recourse to any Church besides our own, for Directions how to believe and live as becomes us. But I was desirous, an Adversary should not be defrauded of the Reputation due to him; and the parts which are suppressed, I look'd upon as his Blemishes and Mistakes. The covering whereof, as it is an Act of Charity to the Reader; so I make no doubt, but εἰς αἰδοῦσι, if the Souls departed have any Sense of what we are doing upon Earth, the Author esteems it a Good Office done to himself too. For we are mightily mistaken, if we imagine, that the Points for which Men of differing Opinions contend so eagerly here below, are of that Concern to the Blessed above, which they seem to Us. In those happy Regions, where perfect Peace, and Concord, Holiness, and Zeal for God's Glory, Reign, there is more Joy at the Conversion of one Sinner, more praise for the pious Labour of one little Tract, which makes Men good Livers, than for the winning Profelytes to this or that Communion (as distinct from the rest that disagree with it in less substantial Niceties) than for vast Volumes of subtle Disputants, which make for the Interest of any of those Factions, into which Christendom is so unfortunately divided.

More a great deal might be said upon this Occasion; but thus much seems to me enough, for all who are rather desirous of Edification than Wrangling. Upon the whole, I am not conscious of any real Injustice done to the Original. And, Fame being not any of the Motives, which induced me to undertake this Work; I shall not be much concerned for the Reputation,

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tion, but am very seriously so for the success, of it. And therefore to my Endeavours I add my most hearty Prayers, that it may have the Good Effect, which, by the assistance of God's Grace, I think it very capable of, To turn Men from Darknes to Light, and from the Power of Satan unto God; that so true Religion may get some Ground (even by my poor Labours) in our degenerate Age, and both I, who would gladly contribute toward, and they who by this means come into, so truly Christian a Design, may hereafter meet in the everlasting Glory of our dear Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

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A

# T R E A T I S E

Concerning

## Holy Resolution.

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### C H A P. I.

#### *The Mischief and Danger of Inconsideration.*

**T**HE Goodness and great Compassion of God for the Souls of Men, among many other Instances, is eminently visible in this, that he hath made choice of such proper and likely methods of saving them. For the Prophets and Messengers sent from time to time, to warn Sinners of their Danger, have not only reprov'd their past Wickedness, and foretold the dismal Consequences of it; but have likewise been careful to discover the causes of their Disease, and so to direct men how such Inconveniences might be remedied, and such Wickedness prevented for the time to come.

Now, of all the causes, which contribute either to the drawing men into Sin at first, or to confirming them in the Habits of it, or hardning them in it finally to their utter and eternal undoing; none is more general, none

B more

more frequently charged in Scripture, than the want of Consideration. Thus *Isaiah* complains of his People; *The Ox knoweth his Owner, and the Ass his Master's Crib; but Israel doth not know,* *my People doth not consider;* and he denounces a  
 Isa. 1. 3. Wo against them, for that *the Harp and Viol, the*  
 & 5. 12, *Tabret and Pipe, and Wine were in their Feasts;*  
 13, 14. *but they regarded not the Work of the Lord, nor considered the operation of his Hands: Therefore my People (says he) are gone into Captivity, because they have no Knowledge: Therefore Hell hath enlarged her self, and opened her mouth without measure; and their Glory, and their Multitude, and their Pomp, and he that rejoiceth shall descend into it.* Thus Sensuality and Pleasure brought these Men to Inconsideration, and Inconsideration brought them to the very brink of Hell; they perished by not attending to God's dealings with Sinners; and forgot those Judgments in the heat of their Jollity, which afterwards they felt to the Manifestation of his Justice, in the Eyes of all the World; for so it follows, *The Lord of Hosts shall be exalted in Judgment, and God that is Holy shall be sanctified in Righteousness.*  
 v. 16.

Nor was this *Isaiah's* complaint only, or the case of *Judah* or *Israel* alone, but all the other Prophets express themselves in like manner, concerning other States and Countries flourishing at that time, as *Babylon, Egypt, Damascus, Tyre, Sidon and Moab*; all whose sins and temporal Punishments were so many Figures, of sensual and sinful Souls laid to sleep, and led on blindfold to the Gates of Hell, by the like wretched carelessness; which never suffered them to see their own danger, till it was too late to prevent it.

For, what account but this, can we give of those

those many, who at this day, do, as *Job* says, *Drink iniquity like Water*, and (as *St. Paul*) *commit all uncleanness with greediness*, and seem to have lost all remorse of Conscience for the most abominable, the most notorious Wickedness, but the same gross affected Ignorance of God's Justice, and their own Condition? May we not to every such Sinner apply that Lamentation of our Lord over *Jerusalem*? If thou didst but know what hangs over thy head for this careless Life of *Luke, 19.* thine; if thou would'st at all reflect, what will be the End of these unlawful Pleasures, it would damp all thy Delights, and put an effectual Check to such destructive Indulgence. But now these things are hidden from thine Eyes.

Not but that thou mightest have known them if thou would'st; but because thou art one of them who say to the Almighty, *Depart from us, Job, 21.* for we desire not the Knowledge of thy ways: That *14.* will not understand nor seek after God, that turn away their Ears from hearing God's Law; and consequently one, not only whose Life, but whose very Prayer, is an abomination to thy Master and Maker. *Prov. 28.9*

And what indeed can be more provoking than this contemptuous Behaviour? That the Majesty of the great God should publish a Law, with so strict a Charge for us to learn and consider it, to study and meditate upon it Day and Night, at home and abroad; when we ly down and when we rise up; to make it our Discourse, our Exercise, our Delight; and yet We, notwithstanding all this, should so slight that Law, as to allow it no place at all in our Thoughts, nay to decline the Knowledge of it with great Industry, as we see many do, for fear of creating disturbance to their Consciences.

*Causes of  
Inconsideration.*

*Wild. 17.*

*II.*

*Acts 24.*

*Joseph. Antiqu. l. 20.*

*c. 5.*

1. For Wickedness, as the Wise man most truly observes, *is very timorous, being condemn'd by her own testimony*; this made St. Paul's Discourse of *Righteousness*, and *Temperance*, and *Judgment* to come, agree so ill with *Felix*. He pretended indeed a desire of hearing him further upon those matters, when he should have a more convenient Season. But why that Season never came, *Josephus* may inform us; who says that *Felix* was a very wicked Man, that *Drusilla* was not really his, but another Person's Wife, from whom he had enticed, and brought her off from her Husband by violence; and therefore those were tender points, and such as *Felix* his Conscience could by no means relish or digest. And I make no doubt, but one very common cause, why the men of this World so little consider their Condition and their Duty; is from a fear, lest they should thus be brought to see and to condemn those Faults, which they cannot prevail with themselves to forsake, and therefore choose to continue insensible of.

2. A second cause of Inconsideration the Scripture hath taken notice of, not much different from the former, which is, that of worldly men being totally immersed in the Cares and Pleasures of this Life, so that the thoughts of God, and their Spiritual Concerns, are utterly shut out; and thus the Soul hath no room left for her own proper business. Thus *Jeremy* complains, that after all his Preaching, *No man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done?* but Every one turned to his course, *as the Horse rusheth into the Battel*. By which Comparison the Holy Ghost gives us a lively Representation of that eager fury, and greediness, with which men pursue the pleasures or advantages of the present world,

world, when their Affections are once set upon them, and how very hard it is to stop their obstinate carrier, or recover them to a better mind and sense of things.

3. A third sort of Inconsideration there is, which proceeds neither from a settled purpose to do ill, nor from any great engagements which divert men from doing better, but rather from a certain Levity and unthinking Temper of mind, which troubles it self with nothing that is serious and weighty, but *Accounts Life a Pastime*, and seeks nothing above Recreation: These Men are as full of security, as highly contented with themselves, as though they had all the good works of the best men, to produce in their Justification. And this is the very extremity of Vanity and Delusion. For, as in the affairs of this World, that Merchant would be accused of great folly, who should never inspect his Accounts of Profit and Loss; and that Master or Pilot were deservedly condemned, who minded nothing but Feasting on board, and in the mean while suffered his Vessel to drive, wheresoever Wind and Tide should carry her: So much more, in the business of the Soul, is he chargeable with folly, and madness, who refuses the trouble of Consideration and Care; because the Damage and Calamity consequent upon such neglect, is much more dreadful, and unretrievable, than any temporal loss can possibly be. For alas! there will come a time, when such men must see and understand their misery, whether they will or no. Even then when as the Prophet says, *The whirl-* Jerem. 30.  
*mind of the Lord goeth forth with fury, and it shall* 23, 24.  
*fall with pain upon the head of the Wicked, in the*  
*latter days they shall consider it.*



Now the Consideration I would exhort men to, is not every cold or slight thought, but such an ardent and earnest application of mind, as answers the weighty purposes about which it is to be employed. It is such a Thoughtfulness as first and principally looks to the State of our own Soul; no man is truly Wise, who is not wise for himself. All Wisdom and Knowledge without this, though otherwise never so profound and large, is a Building without a Foundation. All Consideration should begin and end in our selves. And if this might have due place in the world, few Souls would be lost. Our Lord commends the unjust Steward, for his prudent foresight of that Poverty, which he saw approaching, when he should be called to Account, and put out of his Master's Service. And from thence we may easily gather, how much more grateful it would be to our great Master in Heaven, if We, who are Stewards of his Talents in this Life, would seriously consider our present Estate, and make a wise Provision for the Time, or rather for that vast Eternity to come.

And if this matter were rightly stated, I cannot but think the two main Inlets, to Perdition or Salvation hereafter, are *Consideration* and *Inconsideration*. Should we ask most of those unhappy Spirits, now doom'd to everlasting Misery, what was the original of their Ruin and Torment, they would answer *Inconsideration*. For so the Wise man introduces them speaking, *We Fools counted the Good man's Life madness*; which is in effect to confess, that they never considered his or their own Conversation before. Again, if we enquire of the Blessed in Heaven, what was the first step to their Conversion

version in this World, and from that to their Happiness in the other; they would tell us, it was some Pious Thought well improved, and closely followed while upon Earth. *I thought upon my own ways*, says David, *and turned my feet unto thy Testimonies.* And oh! How happy, how seasonable was that Thought, which wrought so Blessed a Change, and thereby gained a Crown of Eternal Glory! Psal. 119.

### SECT. I.

*That Consideration must descend to particulars.*

**B**Y this you see, of how great use and efficacy Consideration is to our amendment in this, and our Salvation in the next World. The Prophet *Ezekiel* indeed makes it the beginning of all our Virtue, and the forsaking of all our Vice. For having shewed at large, that every one shall bear his own burden, and that each shall dye for those Sins only which himself commits: He acquaints us by what means it is, that a bad man becomes good; declaring, that the *Penitent shall save his Soul alive*; Why? *Even because he considereth, and turneth away from all his Transgressions.* Which is an Expression very Emphatical, and intimates, that none but they who do not *Consider*, will continue in a wicked course, and so perish everlastingly. Ezek. 18.

The wicked Lives of Christians can hardly be imputed to any other Cause, than either Infidelity, or Inconsideration; and since we cannot reasonably suspect the *First*, the Charge will lie upon the *Second*. That is; Men believe in general, that there is a God; that he rewards

the Good, and punishes the Evil ; that there is a Heaven, and a Hell; and a Judgment to come, and the like ; but they never enter far into these matters, nor apply them to their own case in particular ; nor trouble themselves to think, which of these is like to be their own Portion ; and so the Doctrines, thus loosely entertained, have no effect upon their Lives and Actions, which is the true reason, why they live in such Inconsistence with their Profession. For, though the Articles of our Belief be of themselves most forcible Motives to Piety and Virtue, yet if the Powers of the Mind be not exercised upon them, if they be not diligently looked into , frequently contemplated , and warmly applied, the Virtue they have will not exert it self, but remain as void of effect, as the most Sovereign Medicines, whose greatest Excellence can have no success, unless the Patient take them, and the Drugs mingle and Incorporate with his Blood and Humours. An Example or two will make this matter plain.

How few are there, who do not believe they shall dye, and after Death be Judged, yea, and be damned if they Live and Die in their Sins ? And yet how few are there, who live as if they believed these things ? And whence is this ? Because they believe these things loosely and in general Terms, but never bring them home to themselves. The man believes he shall Dye, but he does not consider when, nor where ; not how shortly, nor how miserably he may Dye, and so he is not affected with that thought. But did he look upon Death as a thing ready at hand, that he were now just at the point of it, and could no longer escape ; did he reflect what condition he should be in at that last hour, what

what grief, what fears, what pangs he should endure in the painful Passage; what a dismal State of Horror awaits him afterwards; and that, not for a year, or two, or twenty, or a Thousand, or a Million, but for all Eternity; that he is this moment ready to be laid in his Coffin and his Grave, there to be gnawed and devoured by Worms, and never more to appear in Flesh, but at the great Day of Universal Judgment; he that considered these things seriously, and pursued the thought, and spent some time in it; and imagined Death and Judgment present; (for here is the fatal Deceit, that a few Years, nay sometimes a few Months or Days, are esteemed a great distance of time;) this Man would feel himself moved after another manner, than he is only by talking of the matter in general. He would find some good degree of *David's* warmth, when the Fire kindled within, and would, I doubt not, reap the same good Effects of it, by taking heed to his ways,\* and resolving not to offend in his Tongue. Psal. 39.

But, because we think not at all, or but seldom and very slightly of these matters, therefore these Principles are without any Profit entertained by us. We are as Men that have Souls, and know them not; Understanding, and use it not; Memory, and remember not themselves, and their own greatest Good and Evil; Wills and Affections, but apply them not, except to Trifles and Vanities: In short, as Men quite besides themselves, Stupid, Asleep, and Dead, for want of the Life and Spirit, of true and active Consideration. Which is the greatest folly we can possibly be guilty of; the heaviest Calamity that ever can befall us.

Since then Consideration is so profitable, so necessary

necessary a thing, I thought fit to begin with urging and recommending this as a requisite preparation for the following parts of this Treatise. For without this, neither any thing I have said already, nor all I shall or can say, will have any Effect at all. We find by daily Woful experience, how many Millions of Men are not one whit the better, for so many good Books, so many excellent Sermons, so many Virtuous Examples, so many terrible Chastisements upon Sinners, as every day presents them with. They want either the Will, or the Leisure; they dare not, or they have not the Grace to consider them; but pass over all with neglect and disdain, and labour to divert their Eyes, and Ears, and Thoughts with objects grateful to Flesh and Sense; and drive away all such Reflections as would give them any (though it were a most profitable) present Uncasiness.

But, since as the Prophet *Jeremy* hath forewarned us, we shall one day be compelled to see, and consider these things, when it will be too late to reap any Benefit by our Knowledge; how much better were it for every Man to do that by Choice to his Salvation and unspeakable Comfort, which he else must do by Force, without any advantage, and with inexpressible Grief and Remorse? Let us then  
*Eph. 5.16.* take *St. Paul's* advice; *Redeeming the time*, and not running headlong with the World into destruction. Let us stop a little, and ask our selves, what we do, whither we are going, and where all this will end at last. Borrow some time at least from thy Mirth, and thy Company, from thy Pleasures and thy Business; for this well employed, would make  
 thee

thee good amends, and give thee Cause of Joy and Laughter, when thy jolly Friends, who refuse the like Consideration, may perhaps mourn and weep without Hope or Comforter.

And for the promoting and assisting thee in this good Work, I have put into thy hands the following Considerations: The Sum of all, which may be reduced to two Heads, the Knowledge of God, and of our Selves. *This is Life Everlasting*, (says our Blessed Saviour) *to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent*, that is, such a Knowledge of God, as the Christian Religion teaches us. And from hence we shall learn to know our Selves too; for as in Philosophy one Contrary tends to the Illustration of another, so here the Knowledge of Almighty God, and his most eminent Perfections, leads us by a reflex act to know our selves, our own Infirmities, and Frailty, and extream Vileness. Joh. 17. 3.

Now the Nature and Essence of God, is a Knowledge too excellent to be attained in this Life: And therefore all we can reach to here, is to know him by his Attributes and Perfections: His Majesty, and Mercy, and Judgments: His Hatred against Sin, and Love to Good Men; his Benefits and Promises to all Mankind; his Grace, his Will, his Commandments, his Threatnings, his Dealings with others that have gone before us; to what end he Created and placed us in this World; what Duties we are obliged to, what Helps we have toward the performing them, and what hinderances we must be careful to avoid; all which the following Chapters set before us, and so teach us to know God and our selves

selves aright. Read then, Christian Brother, but read not hastily, or for meer Curiosity: The matter requires Attention, and Leisure, and diligent Application; it is the weightiest thou canst possibly take in hand, the very same which Christ hath called the *One thing needful*, and all other things in this World, when put into the Ballance with it, are in comparison as nothing, altogether Lighter than Vanity it self. Reflect then, how careful thou wouldst be in the examining the Writings and Evidences of a Mortgage, or Estate; and be not less solicitous to secure a Treasure of much greater value; for be assured, that the Importance of what thou art now going about, is no less, than either thy Life or Death Everlasting.

## CHAP. II.

*That there is a God, rewarding Good and Evil.*

**I**T is usual in all other Arts and Sciences, to lay down some Principles without any proof, and to take them for granted; because they are such, as either the Learner is presumed to know before, or else are so plain and self-evident, that the mention of them alone makes them sufficiently understood.

The Apostle intimates to us, that the same Method obtains in Divinity too. For by saying,  
 Heb 11.6. *He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him:* He supposes Two Principles, in which a  
 Man

Man must be satisfied, before he can seek or draw near to God. The First is the Existence, the Second the Justice, of God; that he *is*, and that he *is a Rewarder*.

And these indeed are Principles, so evident in themselves, and which seem so wrought into the frame of every Man's mind, that, were not the Wickedness of the Age we live in lost to all Shame, it were not only needless, but a sort of affronting the sober sense of Mankind, to begin a Christian Tract with the Proof of these two Points. But, since Impiety hath so lift up her head, as not only to offend and despise, but even to deny, our Maker, the better to countenance Sin, and to stifle the Worm of Conscience; I am under a necessity of beating Men from this desperate Refuge; by laying before them the incontestable Evidence of these Two Truths. Which have so close a dependence upon each other, that if the *first* be proved, the *second* plainly follows. For admitting, that there is a God, whose Providence governs and takes care of all whom he hath created, the Consequence is not to be avoided, that he is concerned to recompence the same persons, according as they shall have deserved well or ill at his hands.

*First* then, for Proof of this Principle, *That there is a God*, I need only refer Men to their own Sense and Reason; and desire them to look upon the World, where God hath drawn himself as it were, in Images so lively, and imprinted so many, so legible, Characters of his Perfections, that the plainest Man alive may read and understand them. Hence it is, that the Wise Man long since complained of the extreme Folly of those *vain people, who continued ignorant of God, and could not out of the good things* Wisd. 13.  
1, 5.  
*that*



that are seen, know Him that is, nor by considering the Works acknowledge the Work-master : Since by the Greatness and Beauty of the Creatures proportionably the Maker of them is seen. Hence St. Paul *Rom. 1. 20.* tells the Romans, that the invisible things of God are clear from the Creation of the World, even his eternal Power and Godhead, so that they were without excuse. These, like a Ray of Light shining into a dark place through a small Chink, lead us to that Sun, from whence this Beam descends. And, if a Man, cast upon some foreign barbarous Shore, where no living Creature but Beasts appear, would upon the sight of some exquisite Building, make no difficulty to conclude, that some Man had been there, because a Creature void of Reason could never have finished so artful a Composition : Shall we behold this World, a Work so full of Wonder, and not confess a wise Artificer, who fram'd it with such astonishing Order and Art ? Can we lift up our Eyes to the Heavens, that Sky of vast extent, that Ornament of Stars and Planets innumerable, those Motions so different, so unequal, and yet so regular, as not to change their Course, or ever to obstruct each other, and not confess with *David*, that *Psal. 19. 1.* the Heavens declare the Glory of God, and the Firmament sheweth his handy work ? Can we descend to this Earth, on which we dwell, and observe the Bulk, the Beauty, the Variety of it, its Mountains and Valleys, its gay Cloathing of Grass, and Herbs, and Flowers ; the Rivers which run like Blood in the Veins of this huge Body, the Riches of its Fruits, the strangeness of its Situation, hung like a Ball in the midst of the Air, without Pillar or Basis, and not ask our selves that question, *Who*

*Who hath laid the measures thereof, or who hath Job, 38. 5, stretched the Line upon it? Whereupon are its foundations fastned, or who laid the Corner Stone thereof? Can we once more observe the Sea, which begirds this dry Land round about, that Scene of more Wonders than Tongue can express, that Gulf into which all Rivers are perpetually Flowing, always full and yet never running over; that restless Ebb and Flood of contending Waters, that dreadful raging Element, that Swells, and Roars, and threatens to devour and swallow up the Earth at once: And, though it be Situated above it, and makes daily Assaults upon it, yet suddenly recoils from its appointed Borders, where there is nothing to check or dam it up; can we I say observe all this, and not Reflect, as God instructs Job, Who shut up the Sea with Ch. 38. 8, Doors, when it brake forth as out of the Womb? 10, 11. I established for it my decreed place, I have set Bars and Doors, I have said, hitherto shalt thou come, but no further, and here shall thy proud Waves be stayed.*

This Evidence we have from things without us, but if we would seek God nearer home, we cannot fail to find him within our own Selves. Every part of these Bodies are so many Miracles preaching their Maker to us. And when St. Paul speaks to the Athenians, of seeking the Lord, if happily they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us, for in Him we Live, and Move, and have our Being; his meaning is, that by considering the works of God, and especially the wonders of humane Nature, we may come to so clear a perception of God, as even in some sort to be said to feel and handle

handle him. So jointly do all things concur to the Manifestation of their Maker ; so effectually do they demonstrate, and Copy out, to us their great Original. Nothing is so little, as not to declare his Greatness ; nothing so great, as not to confess its Subjection to this Sovereign Lord ; nothing so low, as not to lead us up to his Majesty ; nothing so high, as not to descend to our Capacities for teaching us this Truth.

It were endless and needless to produce all that might be alledged in confirmation of this Principle : A Principle so evident, that no Man of Learning ever stood out against it ; but all Considering Persons, in all Ages and Places, have been driven by the manifest Evidence of Truth, to own, *That there is a God*. If it be Objected, that we have some instances in Story, of Men who openly disavowed this Belief ; I answer, that some of those were scandalously ignorant and sensual, rather to be reckoned among Beasts than Men ; and  
 Diog. Laert. 2. c. 4. that others of better understanding did not so much deny the Being of one true God, as expose the vanities of Pagan Idolatry, and refute the many false Gods then worshipped by the Common People.

But the Truth is, most of those reputed *Atheists* did not deny God in Opinion, so much as in Fact : They were Men of sensuality and  
 Phil. 3. 19. Sin, whose *God was their Belly*, and their  
 Eph. 2. 12. Pleasure ; and therefore such, as St. Paul says, *Live without God in the World*. And yet these very Persons, so loth to confess God in their better Circumstances, in times of Distress, and at the approach of Death, were as forward in acknowledging and calling upon him  
 Laſtancelm  
 the. lib. 3. for

for help, as any other People whatsoever. But for Men of Judgment, and Learning, and Sobriety, whether they were *Jews* or *Gentiles*, They never had any doubt of this matter, discerned abundant evidence for it; Such particularly as I shall now produce in the following parts of this Chapter.

SECT. II.

*The Arguments by which the Heathens proved, that there is a God.*

THE most Eminent for Learning and Judgment among the Heathens, were those Persons commonly called Philosophers. Of which there were *Four* principal sorts, distinguished by the several sorts of Science they profess'd. These were the *Natural*, the *Moral*, the *Metaphysick*, and *Mathematick*. The *Three* former have each their proper Proofs for the Existence of God. The *Fourth*, not concerning it self with efficient and final Causes, (under which two Respects only God is Knowable to Humane reason) hath no Proofs peculiar to it self, but borroweth from the other *Three*.

Among other Infinite Arguments to this purpose, Natural Philosophy insists upon these *Three*, as the Principal Heads to which the Rest are reducible. *Motion*, the *Final*, and the *Efficient Cause*, the Force whereof may appear by the following Examples.

That taken from Motion proceeds upon this Axiom, *That whatsoever is moved is moved by something else*: And in Motion this is farther observable, that one thing moves in subor-

C

dination

dination to another. And here the old Philosophers thought these Sublunary Bodies moved by the influence of the Heavenly, and those again by the highest Orb of all, called therefore the *First Moveable*: beyond which they could go no farther among created Beings.

The Question then is, Who moves this *First Moveable*? To say, it moves it self, is against the Axiom laid down before; to say it is moved by some other, not only contradicts it's being the *First*, but brings back the same Question, *Who Moves that*? And this Difficulty must remain, till you come to something which moves it self, and is not moved by another. But this must be something above created Nature, and is that which we call God. This was esteemed a Demonstration, and illustrated by *Plato* and *Aristotle* by the instance of a Clock, where the Hammer striking shews the next Wheel, and that the next, and so from one to another through the whole Engine, till at last the Motion of all the Wheels be resolved into the Clock-Maker himself. The Consent and Subordination of this Motion is compared by *Aristotle* to a Quire, where the *Præcentor* gives the Key, and the rest strike in with their respective Parts, to make one perfect Harmony. And thus God in the Creation is supposed to have set the *First Moveable* going, That, to have communicated the Motion thus received to all other Bodies; which ever since continue to move in such Order, and Concord, as is convenient for the Preservation and good Government of the whole Mass. And thus a God is proved from Motion.

Plat. de  
Leg. l. 10.  
Aristot.  
Phys. l. 8.  
Ch. 5.

Arist. de  
Mundo.

That

That of the *Final Cause* stands thus. Experience shews, that every Creature is by Nature appointed to aim at some End: (As the Bird in Building her Nest, and the Fox in making his Den, and the like.) Now the Enquiry arising from hence is, Who appoints and directs that Nature, which directs each particular Creature. And this is not Capable of any other Answer, than, that Nature is directed by something above it. And that which is Superiour to Nature is no other than God.

Philos. de  
Opificio  
Mundi.

Then for the *Efficient Cause*; the Corruptions, Alterations, and perpetual Motions of Created Beings, argue them to have had a Beginning. And no Philosopher but *Aristotle* ever disagreed to this Principle; nay, even He Relinquished his singular Opinion of the World's Eternity, and Confessed the contrary at last, in his Book to *Alexander*. Now whatever had a Beginning must have an *Efficient Cause*. It could not make it self, for that is to give it a Power before it was, and to suppose it to be, and not to be, at the same Time. The Whole could not be made by any part of it self: This is yet more Absurd; and we may as well pretend, that the Finger made the Body, before it was a Finger or part of the Body. Hence then it follows, that something more excellent than the whole World, or any part of it, made the World; and that Being, more excellent than the whole World, and the Maker of it, is but another Name for *God*. Such convincing Arguments does Reason, and the Contemplation of meer Nature furnish, for the Existence of God, abstracted from all the Light and assistance of Revelation and Faith.

Plutar. de  
Plac. Phil.  
Arist. Phy.  
L. 8. de  
Gen. &  
Cor. 1. A-  
ristot. &  
Plot in. de  
Mundo.

The Metaphysician pretends to Treat of Higher and more Abstracted Matters, and therefore the Subject before us falls more properly under his Consideration, and He hath greater Variety of Arguments to prove it by.

1. *First*, then He tells you, that every Finite Being, must needs proceed from something else, which sets those Bounds and Limits, in which the Finiteness of it's Nature consists. And since, in this World there is not any thing which is not so Bounded, we must of necessity admit some Infinite Maker, who limited these Creatures at Pleasure, as a Potter frames the Vessels, turned by him, in Shapes and Proportions, agreeable to his Fancy, and to the Uses he intends them for. *Whatever is by Participation*, he says, *must be referred to something which is not by Participation, but of it self*. Now those things are said to be by Participation, which have not the utmost degree of Perfection, but are capable of Addition or Increase. But all the Creatures and parts of the World are thus. They are Finite in their Nature, they have only a Limited Perfection, they may have Additions made to them; therefore they must be all resolved into some Infinite and absolutely Perfect Cause, subsisting of it self; and this is God. For He only is of Endless Perfection, and from that unexhaustible Store Communicates to his Creatures their respective Perfections; which are but so many little Particles of his own, and are to be referred thither at last, like Beams of Light to the Sun, or Rivulets to their Common Source.

2. It is another Principle in this Science,  
That

That *All Multitude and Distinction proceeds from Unity*. The Motions of the lower Orbs come from the moving of that One Highest of all; the innumerable Rays of Light from one Sun; many Boughs from one Stock; the Veins, and Arteries, and Nerves, from one general Trunk common to each: The Infinite Operations of Reason, and Sense, Generation and Corruption, Digestion and Nourishment, and ten Thousand Particular Actions and Motions, different in their Kind, admirable in their Order, distinct in their Offices, All take their Beginning from one most simple and indivisible Substance, the Soul; which produces, and Governs, and Directs them all, in their innumerable, different, and contrary, Functions. And if this be the Case of each particular Creature with it's respective Unity, the whole Creation, (which consists of so many Millions of Multitudes and their Unities,) must in all Reason be referred to one most Simple and Abstracted Unity, which gave beginning to them all; and This is God.

3. This is urged again from that Subordination of the Creatures, whereby each plainly serves others, and all conspire together for the Common Good. Thus the Heavens move without ceasing, but not for themselves; the Water moistens, the Air cools and cherishes, the Sun warms, the Moon and Stars shed their Influence, the Wind refreshes, the Earth receives these Benefits, not for her own Convenience, but to bring forth Food; She feeds Cattle, and They feed Man. Imagine then a well appointed Army, in Rank and File, all moving one Way, turning together, mutually assisting one another



in some Common Design ; and , if it would be Absurd to think this Union and Agreement did not proceed from Order, Discipline, and Obedience to some Commander in Chief ; learn from hence the Prodigious Folly, of supposing the much more Wonderful Consent and Subordination of the Creatures, not to proceed from the disposal of some Wise and Universal Governour, and Creator, who appoints to each it's Task and Station, by the Observance whereof the Safety and common Advantage of the Whole, is thus regularly Consulted.

4. A *Fourth* Reason to this purpose is, That marvellous and inimitable Art and Forecast, that Order and Usefulness , that Beauty and Proportion, observable in every the least part, of even the least, and, in common Esteem, most Despicable, Creature.

Infomuch, that if all the World should lay their Heads together , they could not with their utmost Contrivance make a Gnat , or a Flea, or a Leaf of a Tree. Such Proportion of Parts , such Variety of Colours, such Distinction of Offices , such Correspondence of Instruments ; and all these so fitted , so nicely framed to serve each other, that there are more Miracles than Members, and the more you Contemplate ; the more you will stand Amazed. This could never be the Work of Chance, as *Lucretius* fondly imagined, for Chance proceeds not by Rule, and Method, and Certainty : Such Productions so far exceeding not only the Skill, but even the Comprehension , of the Wisest Man, declare a Provident and Powerful Artificer ; This Argument converted *Galen*, and forbad his

his irreligious purpose of ascribing the praise of such Workmanship to Nature any longer. This made a Heathen Platonick after long search into these Matters cry out, *I will praise God in what I understand, and will admire him in what I do not. For I often do things for which my Servants conceive no Reason; and I see Children despise Jewels, and burn good Books, meerly because they have not Capacity enough to understand the true worth of them.* And indeed, nothing is a more effectual means, to inspire us with the Love and Admiration of our Great Creator, than a frequent Contemplation of his Works. That Heart must be prodigiously Hard and Stupid, that can exercise it self in these, without feeling strong and lasting Impressions of Religion left behind.

5. One Argument more under this Topick is the Immortality of the Soul; a thing generally received from the Antients, upon the Account of it's being an Immaterial Substance, and Independent upon the State of our Mortal Body. And this appears, from it's being often more vigorous in Age, and Sicknefs, more Active and Clear, and Pregnant in Feeble and decaying People, than it ever was in time of Youth, or when the Constitution and Health was soundest. Thus again it was believed Immortal, and Immaterial, from it's eager and insatiable Thirst after Wisdom and Knowledge, and never being contented with Bodily Pleasures, or any other Sensible Object. From whence the Philosopher inferred, that some other Satisfaction is prepared for this Soul in another State, and that so Excellent, that all Wisdom, and Knowledge,

Themist.  
de Anima.  
Plutar. de  
Placit. Phil.  
lof.

Ecclef. 12.  
7.

and Beauty, and whatsoever creates Love, and Joy, and Content, shall be her Portion, wherein She shall Delight and Rest her Self for ever. Now if the Soul be Immortal, he that made it must be so; and to that Maker it must return, after it's Departure out of this Body. Which seems to be the true Meaning of that Old Doctrine, concerning the Common *Soul of the World*; from whence some Philosophers held all Particular Souls to come, like Sparks from the Fire, or Rays from the Sun; and at their Separation to be Reunited to, and remain with that general Soul, to all Eternity. All which comes very near to that of the Preacher, *The Spirit shall return to God, who gave it.* And thus much shall suffice for the Metaphysical Proofs of a God.

I have reserved those of Moral Philosophy for the last Place, because they are Plainer and Easier than the former, and lye more Level to the Capacity of the Mean and Unlearned Reader.

1. The *First* of these is that Natural Inclination and Disposition, even in the worst of Men, to confess some Divine Power. This is evident from the Consent and Practice even of the rudest and most barbarous Countreys; from the common way of lifting up Mens Eyes and Hands to Heaven in times of Distress, or Surprise; nay, even from the Confession of Atheists themselves, when under any grievous Calamity, or at the approach of Death, as *Seneca* declares; and the Example of *Caligula* shews, that such are most fearful of an Avenging Power in their Misery. Which could not be, if Nature and Conscience did not  
force

force the Sense of a God upon them. This last is so substantial a Proof, that *Zeno* preferred the Confession of an Atheist, before the Disputes of the most Learned Philosophers. Because Men in Extremity speak the true Sense of their Souls, and have put off that Vanity, and Ambition, that Hypocrisie, and Dissembling, which they used in opposing a Deity before, when Health and Prosperity, Liberty and Wantonneſs had emboldned them.

From hence the Moralist advances to the Proof of *One only God*; for God must be Infinite; and Infinite but One can be, Two cannot stand together; Infinite can admit of no Rival, no Equal. That this Unity was received by the Heathens, he argues, with *Lactantius*, from their addressing to one God, in their Oaths, Imprecations, Prayers, and Solemn Wishes; especially when Vehement, and in any Affliction. That, though the Learned and more Judicious, complied with the Vulgar Errors, yet *Plato* makes it a Mark of his being serious, that he then mentions God in the singular Number. That *Socrates*, pronounced by the Oracle the Wisest Man in all Greece, was put to Death for exposing the Multitude of the Heathen Gods. *Aristotle* resolves all into *One Father of Gods and Men*, the Creator and Preserver of all Things, and says, the Plurality of Gods was invented, only to express the different Powers and Perfections of this *One God*, by the variety of his Benefits and Ministers: so that he makes all Gods but One to be Servants. *Zeno* urged, that either there is one God or no God. *Plutarch*, and *Seneca*, and *Epictetus*, affirm, that there is One God; that this God governs, and his Providence is over all; and lay this down for the first and Fundamental

Instit. L.  
2. C. 2.

Ep. 13. ad  
Dionys.

*Aristotle* De Mund.  
Instit. in  
Apolog.

mental Article of Reason and Morality. In short, he who desires farther satisfaction in this Point, may find it in St. *Cyril's* Book against *Julian* the Apostate ; and *Lactantius* his First and Second Books against the Gentiles. And thus the Moralists *First* Argument is supported by the Instinct of Nature, the Force of Conscience, the Custom of all Nations, the Consent of all Wise Men, agreeing in a God, and in One only, who made and governs the World.

2. The *Second* is taken from the Ultimate End or chief Good of Man. Which is a Consideration peculiar to moral Philosophy ; In regard that Science, undertaketh to lead Men to that End, for which thy were Created, the utmost Happiness they are capable of, to which they tend in this Life, and in which they rest without farther prospect or desire, when once they have obtained it. In order to our understanding this matter, we are to observe, that Philosophers thought every thing to have some particular End, and a constant appetite and tendency to that End. This in Inanimate Creatures they defined to be those Motions and Operations to which Nature determined them ; in Brutes the Gratification of their Senses : But in Man, who is by Reason distinguished from Brutes, some Higher and more Excellent Object. For, since we feel by experience, that our Mind is oftentimes not quiet, even when our Senses are fully satisfied ; this argues Sensual Delight not to be that Chief Good, in which our Soul can rest and enjoy it's perfect Felicity. Hence grew those infinite Disputes, and various Opinions, concerning the final Felicity of Mankind : But  
In *Phædon*.
*Plato*, upon a full examination of the matter declared, that nothing in this Life could be  
our

our chief Good ; because he was able to demonstrate, that none of those things pitched upon by Philosophers, could satisfy the Desires of the Humane Soul : Not Riches, for these are uncertain, mutable and vain; and often involve us in more danger and trouble than Poverty. Not Honours, for these are equally vain and inconstant, and depend upon the Humour and Breath of others. Not bodily Pleasures, for these are common to us with Beasts, and leave a strong and nauseous disrelish behind them. Not Moral Virtues, for these consist in a perpetual conflict with our Passions, which are Eternally disturbing our Repose : In short, whatever we fix upon here, it fails us, it yields no lasting satisfaction in this Life, and therefore we must be content to wait for our compleat Happiness in a Life to come. So that Reason and Morality could go thus far, that Men cannot be perfectly happy in this present State : Nay, these prove, that this Happiness of the Soul, in the life to come, must be a Spiritual and Immaterial Object ; because the Soul is a Spirit, and that it must be Immortal, because the Soul it self is so. And, which is yet more surprising, and gives *Plato* a Right to be called *Divine*, he tells us, *it consists in being inseparably united to God : This is the Sum and Complement, the utmost Aim and End of all Blessedness.* What could any Christian say more ? And yet a Heathen Scholar of *Plato's* explains his Master thus, *The ultimate end of Man is his Sovereign Good, and that is no other than God.* So that even Pagans could prove and find out God, by the consideration of the chief Good of Man, which was the *Second Argument* I propounded, to prove the Existence of a Deity, under this Head of moral Philosophy.

*Plat. Phaed.*

*Plotin.  
Enn. 1.  
L. 4. c. 1.*

The

3. The *Third*, and last I shall mention, is deduced from Virtue and Vice, and the Rewards and Punishments, by Nature, Equity and Reason, due to these. For, as in all other Acts and Effects of our Great Creator, we can plainly discern Proportion and Order, Justice and Wisdom, and a careful Providence; so we may be assured, these Measures will be kept more especially in his dealings with Man, the Best and First of all his other Creatures in this lower World.

Now other Creatures, we plainly perceive, are directed by Nature to their proper Ends, and while they hold this Course, they are as happy as their Capacity will admit; but, when they deviate from that, Damage, and Sorrow, and Loss is their Portion. Man only hath Reason to know and judge what he ought to aim at, and freedom of choice to pursue this by Virtue, or swerve from it by Vice. Equity then and Justice require, that they, who go the right way by living well, should be rewarded with Happiness, and attaining their true end; and that those who abandon it for Sensual and Sinful Pleasures, should be punished for such wicked and perverse Choice. But in this World many notoriously evil Men are least punished, Some are too great and powerful to be corrected by the hand of Men; and Some again in low and afflicted Circumstances, have no other return here for their Virtue, and Patience, and strict Honesty, but Envy and Malice, Reproach and Contempt, Injury and Oppression. So that, either Providence, which is nicely just in matters of less moment, is wretchedly defective in this great Concern; or else there must be a Place and Time reserved for Rewards and Punishments in a Future State; and a just and Powerful Judge

to

Socrat. in  
Apol. Pla-  
to in Crat.  
& Gorg. &  
Phæd. & L.  
10. de Leg.  
Plur. de  
scra Nu-  
minis vin-  
dicta.

to make amends for the unequal Distributions of Good and Evil, permitted in this present World. And that Judge can be none but the Creator himself.

Thus I have shewed, how the Contemplation of the Creatures, and the undeniable Evidence of Reason, led the Heathen, who had no other Guides, to the Knowledge and Confession of God: My next undertaking will be to observe how the *Jews*, before Christ's coming, were able to confirm this Truth, and to convert the Heathen to the Belief of their *One true God*.

### SECT. III.

#### *The Proofs of a God peculiar to the Jews.*

NOW here we must make a difference between such Arguments peculiar to the *Jews*, as were proper to satisfy and confirm one of their Brethren, and those which would be fit to bring over a Heathen to the Faith. Of the former sort they had many; The Creation of the World by One God; The deriving down the *Hebrew* Religion from the Beginning; The Call of *Abraham*, and Gods familiar converse with him; The miraculous Deliverance of their Ancestors out of *Egypt*, and settlement in the Land of Promise; The Law received by *Moses* from God's own Mouth; The defeat of the Idolatrous Nations; The Erection and Defence of the Jewish Monarchy; The Miracles and Predictions of the Prophets, and infinite other Evidences, that the God of the *Jews* is the only true God. But since all these things, peculiar to the *Jew*, could have no more Credit with an Infidel, than those Scriptures have, in which they



they are Recorded ; The First and great Work must be to demonstrate the Truth of the Scriptures : When this Foundation is once well laid, the Controversy is at an end ; for the Scriptures are only an account of the Doings of that One God, professed by the *Jews* ; whose Existence makes the Point in Question : I shall therefore observe, what the *Jew* hath to say in Vindication of his Scriptures and their Authority ; which may not only be a good prevention against Infidelity, and total Defection from God, and strengthen the Jewish Cause heretofore ; but is in all Ages a seasonable Argument, and of great comfort to every good Christian ; because the Foundation of our whole Faith stands upon the Basis of the Old Testament.

1. First then, the *Jew* urges the great Antiquity of these Writings ; he shews you, that much the greatest part of the things Recorded in the Bible were done before most of the Heathen Gods were Extant ; and thus, as Truth is before Falshood, so God, and his Scriptures, were before Idols and their Fables. *Esdra*s and *Haggai*, and *Zachariah*, and *Malachi*, the very last Writers in the *Hebrew Canon*, near \* Six Hundred Years before Christ, and about the beginning of the Second ( *Persian* ) Monarchy, were before the most Antient Greek Historians, *Hellanicus*, *Herodotus*, &c. 'Tis true, some Poets, as *Orpheus*, *Homer*, &c. lived before ; but the oldest of these reaches no higher than *Solomon*, and so Five Hundred Years short of *Moses*, the First Writer of the Bible ; long after whom, most of the Heathen Gods were yet unborn, as the Gentiles and their Genealogies confess. And as for *Abraham*, who lived  
Five

Josep. l.  
1. con. Ap-  
pion.

\* An. 570.  
Euseb.  
Chron.

Five hundred Years before *Moses*, he was before even those, whom the *Pagans*, for respect to their Antiquity and Excellence, distinguished by the Title of *Dii majorum Gentium*, as *Jupiter*, *Neptune*, *Pluto*; And yet even before that the Scripture contains the Story of about Two thousand Years. The *Pagans* then and their Gods are Fables of a fresh date, in Comparison of the Venerable Antiquity of Hebrew Scripture; Whose Authority must in reason overbear all Writings else, since extant before all others, in those first times of Simplicity and Sincerity; and part of them Translated into divers Languages, before the Monarchy of the *Persians*, that is, before any Heathen Histories were written. See Euseb. Præp. E. van. L. 9. C. 2. 3, 4.

2. The *Jew* desires in the next place, that the manner of Writing, Authorising, and Preserving these Scriptures may be duly considered. For Writing, he says, nothing was ever set down here, but what was either taken immediately from God's own Mouth, as the Books of the Law and the Prophets were; or else, Collected from Time to Time by general Consent, as matters fell out; which is the Case of their Historical part of the Bible in *Judges*, *Samuel*, *Kings*, and some other Books. That this Collection was not made by any single private Man, upon Hearsay, after his own Fancy, or at a distance from the Events related, (as Heathen Histories are) but by general Agreement, at the very Time, while things were fresh, not only in Men's Memory, but even before the Eyes of the Parties concerned, which leaves no Room for Fiction in the Case. Again, the Books written were not admitted into the Canon without great Deliberation, and evident Proof

Proof of their being true. For, either the whole Congregation or Synagogue, who were to approve them, (and among whom commonly were several Prophets) knew the Actions related in those Historical Books to be true, in which all the common People were likewise fully satisfied; or else they saw them confirmed by Signs and Wonders, which was the Testimony God gave to the Truth of *Moses* and the Prophets. So that the Caution used in Authorising these Scriptures was as great as could be desired. And for the Care of preserving the Books thus written and admitted, nothing was ever more Nice. The Reverence of the *Jews* for their Scriptures was such, as will not suffer us to suspect any material Change or Corruption in them. For *first*, Twelve Authentick Copies were taken, for each Tribe One; then a Copy transmitted afterwards to every Synagogue in each Tribe; all this done by Notaries and Scribes, before Examiners and Witnesses: Copies were laid up by the whole Congregation in the Treasury of the Temple, kept under several Locks and Keys, never to be touched but by Persons particularly appointed, nor used but with singular Reverence. To add or diminish, to corrupt or alter, was present Death by their Law. And how is it possible then, that among such Writings, either Falshood should creep in, or Truth, once received, be afterwards depraved? Nay, which makes it in reason still more impossible, the *Jew* observes that no other Nation under Heaven ever expressed an equal Esteem for their Laws and Records: They would not offer to die for them, which the faithful *Jew* was ready to do for every Sentence of Holy Scripture. And hence, in all their Afflictions

Afflictions, and publick Commotions, in all their Captivities and Desolations, they were more zealous to preserve these Writings than their own Lives, and have accordingly kept them uncorrupt more Ages together, than all the Nations in the World have done any other Monuments of Antiquity whatsoever.

3. A *Third* Argument for the Truth of Scripture, is the Character of the Persons who wrote it; the Historical part, I have said, was set down, and attested by Publick Authority. The Prophetick was endited by the Prophets themselves, plain honest Men, Authorised by Miracles, and yet so scrupulous, as never to say any thing of their own Head, but constantly to introduce all, with a *Thus saith the Lord*. As God's Word and not Man's, they left their Predictions in the Publick Treasury, there to be kept till the Event should prove them true. Their Lives were unblameable, their Deaths for most part in Defence of the Truth; such was *Isaiah's*, and *Jeremiah's*, and *Ezekiel's*, and *Amos*, and *Micah's*, in the Later Times of that People. And if we consider their first great Prophet *Moses*, who was withal an Historian, a Lawgiver, a Governour; the First that put Their, or rather God's, Acts into Writing, the First that formed them into a Common-wealth; this Man alone, the Jew thinks sufficient to induce our Belief of what he hath left in Writing.

His Antiquity hath been spoken to already, and even the Heathens confess it; His Miracles are acknowledged by his greatest Enemies: And, whereas some of them Objected these to have been done by Magick, and not by the Power of God, this is a most senseless pretence. For how should a Shepherd learn such Skill in

D

Magick?

Epiph. de  
vlt. Propht.

Eus. Prep.  
Evang. l. 9,  
10. 10-  
seph. cont.  
Ap. C. 1.  
Ant. L. 2.

Magick? And why could not *Pharaoh's* Magicians, who were bred up to this Art, deliver themselves from his Plagues? Why did they cry out, *This is the Finger of God?* Was it ever known, that Magick divided a Sea, called up Quails sufficient to feed Six Hundred Thousand Men, besides Women and Children; drew Water out of a Rock; nourished a vast Army for forty years together, with a Dew from Heaven; caused the Ground to open, and swallow up the Tents and Families of Rebellious Princes; brought Fire from Heaven, and consumed Two Hundred and fifty Persons, without the least Hurt to any that stood about them? Yet these Things did *Moses* in the sight of several Hundred Thousand Men, in the sight of his Enviars and Enemies; And, if any one particular of these Miracles had been liable to Exception, would he have dared to commit them to Writing? Would the People have stood by him, or received those Writings for Divine? 'Tis plain then, he dealt fairly in this matter, and related only such things as every Man present knew to be true. He wrote as he was commanded, and what God and his own Conscience bore Testimony to; He caused the whole to be Read to the People; He laid it up in the Ark, as God's Covenant with that Nation; He caused them all to Vow Obedience to it; He exhorted them to persevere in the Service of that God, a little before his Death; He published his own Infirmities, and the Cause why he was not suffered to enter the Promised Land; He concealed not the Offences of his Brother *Aaron*, his Grandfather *Levi*, or his Sister *Miriam*, (as Worldly Princes use to do in terderness to their own and their Relations Honour;) He did not Labour,

bour, that any of his own Family should succeed him in the Government; but left that to *Joshua*, a Stranger of another Tribe, as God had appointed him. This shews him to have been no Man of an ambitious or worldly Spirit, but a true Servant of God; That he acted, not by Magick or Deceit, but by the Power and Commission of his Great Master; That his Writings were true, and had all the Authority he asserted them to have, that is, That they were the undoubted Dictates of Almighty God.

4. All this is yet more strengthened by the Universal Consent of all those, who wrote after *Moses*. Profane Writers usually correct and reprove some that went before; but now, as a certain Mark, that these Sacred Authors were all guided by the same Spirit, no One of them for so many Ages hath ever opposed, but all approve, and build upon, the former. The Writings of *Joshua* confirm those of *Moses*; the Book of *Judges* that of *Joshua*: Those of *Kings* and *Chronicles* refer you to the more Ancient Records: One Prophet builds upon another, Luke, 24. and Christ approves them all, by that known Division of *Law*, *Psalms*, and *Prophets*, then in Use among the *Jews*. And These are the Four External Proofs of the Old Testament's Authority, The Great and Venerable Antiquity; the Care and Caution used in Writing, Receiving, and preserving these Books, the Sincerity of the Authors; and their Uniform Agreement in one Spirit.

But there are besides these, some internal Considerations, resulting from the Matter and Circumstances of these Books, some Characters of God's own Hand, Spirit, and Providence, as legible in these Letters, as his Ex-

istence was said before to be in his Creatures. Nay, much more visible, in Regard that these Writings were contrived to enlighten those blind Eyes, who could not read him in the Volume of his Works.

5. First then, Observe the Subject they treat of, and the End they aim at. The *Former* consists of the Doings of the One Eternal God; the later is the Glory of that God, and the Salvation of Mankind. And what Writings besides have so Noble an Argument, or so sublime an End? What Philosopher ever pretended to these things? What Historian attributes Battles and Victories to God only? Others extol the Courage of their Soldiers, the Conduct and Vigilance of their Generals; they tell you of Fields won by Convenient Posts, by favourable Weather, by flights of Birds, by Omens and other superstitious Fopperies; but These only say at every turn, *God delivered them into the Enemies Hand, God discomfited and gave the Victory.* Which of the celebrated Heathen Legislators, ever left such Laws, as, *Thou shalt Love the Lord thy God with all thy Heart, and with all thy Soul; and thy Neighbour as thyself?* Which of their Soothsayers had the Confidence to usher in his Predictions, with *The Lord hath spoken it?* Which of their Poets, those Kindlers of Sensuality and Lust, ever broke out into those Raptures of Spiritual and Holy Love; *I will Love thee O Lord my Strength, and Whom have I in Heaven but thee? and there is none upon Earth that I desire in Comparison of thee. Like as the Hart panteth after the Water-brooks, so longeth my Soul after thee O God! My Flesh and my Heart faileth, but God is the Joy of my Life, my Strength and Portion for ever.* Profane Writers treat of

Psal. 18.  
42 73.

Mea

Men, seek the Favour of Men, accommodate themselves to their Passions and Infirmities, are subject to their Errors and Vanities; But the Scriptures treat of things above Flesh and Blood, refer all to God and Ends above Nature. And yet the *Jews*, who wrote these, were as meer Men as the *Gentiles*. Whence then proceeds this mighty Difference, if not from hence; that the Heathen Writings proceeded from a Spirit entirely Humane, but the *Jewish*, from the special Dictates and Directions of a Spirit truly Divine, which enlightened that Nation above any other People in the World?

6. Let us in the next place observe the Stile and Phrase of the Holy Scriptures; so different from that of Common Writers, so inimitable by Man, so expressive of the God that inspired it. No Labour for Ornament and Pomp; no Nicety in Words; but a marvellous Simplicity, suited to the Capacities of the Weak, and yet at the same time, such a Depth as may exercise the Wits of the most Learned. What can be plainer, than the Account of the Creation, to instruct the meanest Reader how the World began? And when all the Circumstances are justly weighed, what Astonishing and Unsearchable Mysteries does the Wisest Man discover in it? With this Simplicity there does also go along a constant Gravity, and becoming Majesty of Expression: The Laws are delivered in short, plain, peremptory Words, without any respect of Persons; *Do this and thou shalt Live; The Soul that Sinneth it shall Die*. But though the Scriptures disdain those little Artifices, which Humane Writers so much affect; yet, where it undertakes to perswade, instruct, and move Men's Passions; no Writings in the



World had ever like effect with these. I could produce Infinite Instances, but for Brevities sake, let any One Read the first Chapter of *Isaiah*, and compare it with any, the most laboured Orations of *Tully* or *Demosthenes*; let him read the Hymns and Psalms in the Bible, and set against them the most Pathetical Poems, ever composed by the Wit of Man, and tell me then, whether there be any comparison in the stirring and firing his Affections.

7. Another thing, which may contribute greatly to shewing the worth of this Book, is the Consideration of some particular Matters contained in it. I shall mention Two. *First*, Those lofty and mysterious Doctrines, above the Reach of Humane Reason; as, That, this whole World should be made of nothing; That Angels should be damned eternally for their Sins; That *Adam* should transmit the Guilt of his Disobedience to all his Posterity; That the Seed of the Woman should deliver us from that Guilt; That God is One Substance and Three Persons; That, the Second of these Persons, being God, should yet be made Man, and die upon a Cross for Mankind; and that he should make a way to Honour and Happiness through Sufferings and Contempt. These and many other Doctrines in the Bible, are so distant from Man's Reasoning, that it could never have entred into his Head to conceive or invent them, much less to require the Belief of them from others; and therefore God, who alone could reveal these Secrets, must needs have been the Author of those Scriptures, which discover them to us.

The *Second* thing I would instance in, is the Prophecies of things to come. To this Evidence

of

of their Divine Power, God challenges the Heathen Idols, *Shew the things that are to come here-* Isa. 13. 23. *after, that we may know that ye are Gods;* so allowing this for a good Testimony of their being so, if they could have given it; Not but that indeed the Oracles and Soothsayers, did sometimes hit upon the right in their Predictions, of some future Events: But then this was done, either by Skill and Foresight in the Stars and Elements, or by the Assistance of Wicked Spirits: And in things either natural and not contingent, and then they might be foreseen in their Causes; or else in such as were properly accidental, and then these Predictions were meer Conjectures, and frequently detected of Uncertainty and Falshood. This *Porphyry*, the great Patron of Paganism, freely confesses: And another Heathen of great Reputation, that these Matters were managed so subtilly, that by the dark, and ambiguous, and general Terms of their Answers, the Oracle always left it self an evasion to save it's Credit, though the Event proved quite contrary, to what was understood to be the true Importance of the Words. So unable are either Men or Devils to prognosticate things purely contingent. But now, in Scripture we meet with almost Infinite Prophecies, delivered by plain unlearned Persons, in particular and express Terms, many Years, nay, many Ages before, when there was no probable Appearance, that such things should ever come to pass; and not any one of these hath failed in any one Circumstance or Tittle so foretold. And because this alone, though all other Arguments were set aside, is a most invincible Proof, that these Scriptures are from God's own Infallible Spirit, who saw

Porph. de  
respon. &  
Orac. Oe-  
nom. de  
falsific-  
Oracul.

and signified so long before, what Wonders his Almighty Power intended afterwards to accomplish, I shall very briefly lay before the Reader, some remarkable Examples of this kind.

Gen. 12. Such was that Prophecy to *Abraham* of his  
Exod. 12. Issue, (when as yet he neither had, nor could  
Porph. in the Course of Nature expect any such,) in-  
cont.Chri. heriting the Land of *Canaan*; and the yet more  
4.Appion. wonderful and unlikely Account of his Poste-  
Contr.Jud. rities descent into *Egypt*; Their Bondage there,  
l. 4. and their Deliverance from thence, after Four  
Hundred Years; The punctual fulfilling where-  
of is not only declared in the Book of *Exodus*,  
but acknowledged by Heathens and Enemies  
to the *Jews*. And it is worth our Observation,  
that this Prophecy was so generally Known and  
Believed, from *Abraham's* time down to *Moses*,  
as to be the great Comfort and Support of that  
Family in their Bondage, and the main Argu-  
ment used by *Moses*, to pacify them under all  
the Hardships of their forty years Passage to the  
promised Land.

Gen. 49. 10 Such again was that of *the Scepter not departing  
from Judah, till Shiloh the Expectation of all Na-  
tions should come*. The last Clause whereof the  
ancient *Hebrews* unanimously expound of the  
*Messiah*, and this was fulfilled near Two Thou-  
sand years after, at the coming of Christ: For  
then did *Herod* a Stranger put the Line of *Ju-  
dah* out of the Government of *Jerry*; and short-  
ly after did they cease to be a People or Go-  
vernment at all. But for the first Clause, it is  
astonishing to reflect, how many improbable  
Circumstances it was clogg'd with. For First,  
when *Jacob* spoke that Prophecy, the *Israelites*  
were few and low, not like to depart out of  
*Egypt*, or ever be a distinct People: And so

not

not like to have any Scepter or Government among them at all. But if they should, yet was there no prospect of it's fixing in the Posterity of *Judah*, who had three Elder Brothers. And least of all in *Moses* his time, who, when he wrote this Prophecy, had the Government himself; and had by God's appointment declared his Successor of the Tribe of *Ephraim*. ( And this by the way makes greatly for the Truth of that Author, that he should leave such a Prophecy in Diminution of his own, and to the Prejudice of other, Tribes, which they would certainly never have indured, had they not been convinced it really came from *Jacob*, though at a time, which gave no prospect of its Accomplishment. ) For the space of Four Hundred years from *Moses* to *Samuel*, the same Improbabilities continued; At length a King was chosen, but of the Tribe of *Benjamin*, and he provided with a Numerous Issue to succeed him. And who could then imagine this Prophecy near fulfilling? Yet God's Word must stand, and therefore, when Men least thought of any such thing; a Poor Shepherd was chosen out of the Tribe of *Judah*, and the Government so settled in his Family, that though many of his Successors offended God more hainously than *Saul* had done, though ten Tribes fell off at once, and returned to their Allegiance no more, but conspired with the Common Enemies to overthrow that Kingdom, yet stand it did, for more than twelve hundred years; till the time Euseb. of *Herod*, under whom Christ was born. Chron. And we may Challenge any Family in the World, to shew the like term of a Government continuing in it.

The like might be said of *Jacob's* foretelling Gen. 48.  
the 49.

Numb. 34. the Greatness of *Ephraim* above *Manasseh*; Of  
 35, 36. the Description given both by Him and *Moses*,  
 Josh. 15, of the particular Portion and Dwelling of each  
 16, 17. Tribe in *Canaan*, which yet was determined by  
 Deut. 31. casting of Lots; Of the same *Moses* foretelling  
 Josh. 6. how God should, many Generations after-  
 1 Kings, 16. wards, forsake that People for their Sins, car-  
 1 Kings, 13. ry them into Captivity and Banishment, and  
 2 Kings, 23. finally give them up, and receive the Gentiles  
 Isai. . 42. in their stead. And whence could these things  
 53. be learnt but from God alone? Whence again,  
 2 Kings, 20. that Curse upon him that should attempt to  
 Isa. 13. & rebuild *Jericho*? Whence the overthrowing of  
 44. 45. *Jeroboam's* Altar in *Bethel*, by *Josiah* Three Hun-  
 dred years after? Whence those Predictions of  
*Isaiah* concerning the Birth, the Life, the Suf-  
 ferings of the *Messias*, so punctual, that it may  
 rather seem a Relation of things past, than a Pro-  
 phesy of them yet to come? Or those other  
 Passages of the same Prophet concerning the De-  
 struction of *Jerusalem* by the King of *Babylon*,  
 and the Destruction of *Babylon*, the Restauration  
 of the *Jews*, and Rebuilding their City and Tem-  
 ple by *Cyrus*? I might heap numberless instances  
 from *Jeremiah*, *Ezekiel*, *Daniel*, *David*, *Samuel*,  
 and many others; the whole Scripture almost  
 being a kind of Divine Body, influenced with  
 this Prophetick Spirit: And almost every day  
 (though we observe or understand it not) some  
 Prophecy or other is fulfilled; and so shall  
 be to the World's End.

That these Writings are Authentick, besides  
 other Proofs, we may be satisfied from hence;  
 that they were published and scattered into ma-  
 ny Thousand Hands before the *Babylonish* Cap-  
 tivity; then carry'd with the People, dispers-  
 ed over *Chaldea* and other parts of the World;

so that there can be no possible Suspicion of Forgery or an Aftergame, since all the World had seen and read them, long before the Events either did, or were supposed in any possibility of coming to pass. All which is yet more strengthened by the Quality of most of those Persons, who delivered these Prophecies; Not Men of Skill or Learning, like the Heathen Astrologers; nor of acute Parts and strong Imaginations, (which *Averroes* fancies capable of arriving to a Spirit of Prophecy) nor Dieted to it by Rules, as some pretend *Apollanius Thyanæus* was; but generally poor, plain, ignorant Men; *David* a Shepherd; *Amos* a Herdsman; sometimes, Women, as *Miriam*, and *Deborah*, and *Hannah*, and *Elizabeth*, and *Anna* the Daughter of *Phanuel*, and the Blessed Virgin, and the Daughters of *Philip*, who could not possibly receive the Fore-knowledge of things, otherwise than by the Inspiration of the Holy Ghost. And this plainly proves the Excellency of Holy Scripture, the Certainty of the things contained there, and the Divinity of its Author.

1 Sam. 16.  
Amos. 1.  
Exod. 15.  
Judg. 4.  
1 Sam. 2.  
Luk. 1.11.  
Acts, 21.

Though the Arguments already mentioned be abundantly sufficient to prove the Truth of Scripture, and consequently a God; yet is it no inconsiderable Advantage, that these Things are confirmed by the Testimony of Heathens and Infidels themselves. In whose Histories are to be found Footsteps of all the most remarkable Transactions Recorded here; disguised indeed with many odd Circumstances and Superstitions; but this is yet a stronger Evidence for Us, because intimating, that those Authors did not copy their Accounts from the Bible, but took them from a General  
and

and Antient Tradition, spread and received throughout the World.

Euseb.  
Præp. E-  
vang. l. 9.  
Joseph.  
Antiq. l. 1.  
2. 13.

The Creation of the World, and Infusion of the Humane Soul by God, was allowed by the general Consent of Philosophers: The Flood of *Noah*, the long Lives of the first Patriarchs, the Tower of *Babel*, and Confusion of Languages; the Affairs of *Abraham*; the Destruction of *Sodom*; the Memorable Acts of *Moses*, and *Joshua*; the History of the *Judges*, and *Saul*, and *David*, and *Solomon*; the Building of the Temple; the Captivity in *Babylon*; the Siege of *Jerusalem* by *Senacherib*, and his Murder at his return, committed upon him by his own Children in the Temple; These and many other matters of Note, are so largely Evidenced by Pagan Writers, that *Josephus* declareth the Publick Monuments of the *Syrians*, *Chaldeans*, *Phanicians*, and many Relations in the *Grecian* History, sufficient to testify the Truth, Authority, and Antiquity of Holy Scripture; though they had been destitute of any other Evidence.

#### SECT. IV.

**H**itherto we have seen what Variety of Evidence God hath given to the World concerning Himself. Upon which Subject I have been the larger, because it is the ground of all I propose to say in this Book; the fundamental Principle of all that Happiness or Misery, which must be our Portion for ever. For if this Point be so certain, so plentifully attested, both by every Creature, and the Words and Writings of the Creator himself, that no Ignorance can excuse our not Acknowledging it,  
nor

nor any Wickedness have the Face to deny it; then sure it becomes us seriously to consider what this God requires from us; and the next Reflection to that of his Creating us, will naturally be, what Duty and Thanks we owe him for it. Thus shall we find him a Merciful Judge, and a Bountiful Rewarder, whom we have already found a Gracious Maker and Lord. And this Thought is the more reasonable and necessary, because it is by no means probable, that that Wise God, who hath appointed every other Creature such Rules of acting, as may some way illustrate his own Glory, should leave Mankind alone, the worthiest and most capable of serving it, without any Obligation to contribute to it.

And yet this St. Paul charges, as a most common and egregious Error, in the Heathen Sages; that, *when they knew God, they were not careful to glorify him as God; but became vain in their Imaginations.* They turned their Knowledge to no true Account, but applied all their Thoughts to the Vanities of this World, without any Regard to the Honour and Deference due to that Excellent Being, of whose Existence they were fully satisfied. With regard to these, and the Judicial Blindness God gave them up to, St. Paul gives the World this Warning, that *The Wrath of God is Revealed from Heaven against all Ungodliness and Unrighteousness of Men, who hold the Truth in Unrighteousness; who know God, and notwithstanding live, as if they owned or knew him not.* And if this were an Admonition and Reproof proper for Heathens, who had only that Natural Knowledge of God, which Reason could infer from the Contemplation of his Creatures; What

Rom. 1.



What Reprehension do We deserve, who have not only that Light of Nature, but his written Word and Law Revealed to the *Jews*? Nay, and besides this too, have heard the Voice of his only Son upon Earth; and live under the Doctrine and Directions of his Gospel; and yet live (many of us) as negligently, as far from Virtue and a good Life, as the errandest Heathen of them all?

- Certainly if that be true, as most unquestionably it is, which the Apostle affirms there of the Heathen Philosophers, that even the little Knowledge They had of God, rendered them altogether without Excuse: Then by our
- Rom. 1. Saviour's own Rule, that *To whom much is given,*
- Luke, 12. *of him there shall be much Required,* we can no
47. way shift off the Inference arising from hence against our Selves, viz. That Our Account shall be vastly heavier, and We much more inexcusable, than the very *Gentiles*, if, after all our clear Knowledge, and such ample Manifestations of the Divine Nature and Justice, We grow vain in Our Imaginations, as They did then, and the much greater Part of the World (it is to be feared) do at this Day. If We, I mean, make to our selves Gods of the Things of this World, devote our Selves entirely to temporal and transitory Cares and Pleasures; and lavishly throw away upon these, that Time and Pains, and Application of Thought and Affections, which we ought to employ in the Service, and to the Honour, of this great and only Lord and Creator.

## CHAP. II.

*Of the End for which Man was Created.*

**T**He Last Chapter is sufficient to Inform us, Who is our Creator. And now the next Point, which regularly offers it self to be considered, is, to what purpose God created us, and this World for Us, so as to make us Lords of all below. We have seen already, that, as Nothing made it self, so Nothing was made for, or to serve it self alone. And therefore it concerns us to know whom Man was made to serve. For the Reason holds equally with regard to Him too, that since Man was not made by Himself, so neither is it likely that he was made meerly for himself.

Now God's own Word hath assured us, that *He made all Things for Himself*, and if all, then *Prov. 16.4* Man, by no means the least and most inconsiderable part of his Works, is no doubt included. They are the vain and inconsiderate only who look upon themselves to be free and at their own Disposall, and imagine, they were sent into the World purely for Pleasure and Diversion. The Sober and Discreet are such as Solomon speaks of, When he says, *The Way Prov. 13. of Life is above to the Wise, that he may depart 24. from Hell beneath.* They keep the End of living constantly in View, and are perswaded that God shall one day bring them into Judgment. Nay, the Christian is forewarned by his Saviour, that even *every idle Word* must be severely reckoned for. And no Man, who converses diligently,

gently, either with his own Reason, or the Holy Scriptures, can remain ignorant or unmindful, that no Provocation charged there upon wicked men, is more heinously resented, than that security of Temper, which fondly fancies, that God regards not Men's Actions, and never intends to take any Account of them. To such therefore as are desirous to discharge this Account faithfully, I am at present addressing my Self. And to these I can give no better Advice, than to look upon themselves as Persons in Trust, to observe seriously, why they were sent hither, and what it is expected they should perform. This will keep us from rambling after Imperinencies, and make us diligent in examining our own Consciences, how our Time ought to be bestowed, what is to be learnt, and what done by us. This will soon convince us, that the true Design of our being placed here is to serve God, and by that Service to gain Heaven and Salvation. This was the Condition of

Deut. 4. our Creation, that *We should be to Him a People*; and this was the Intent of our Redemption, for  
 Luke, 1. therefore *are we Delivered out of the Hands of our Spiritual Enemies, that we might walk before God in Holiness and Righteousness all the Days of our Life.*

And this Consideration rightly improved will have two very valuable Effects. *First*, in a due Sense, that Serving God, and working out our Salvation is our proper and only Business; We shall be convinced, that every Thing which is contrary, or foreign, or not conducive to this End, can turn to no true Profit; That all the Time and Pains laid out upon it is Vanity, and lost Labour; such as must end at last in Shame, and Sorrow, and Repentance;  
 because

because this is no Article of that Reckoning we shall be called upon for, nor can it influence our future State, except so far as it may expose us to Punishment, for mispending our Time and Thoughts upon it. And *Secondly*, since we have but one End to promote, and all other Creatures are only to serve our Occasions in order to that End, this will help us to become indifferent to all these outward Things; and we shall desire them, only in such Proportions, as may be useful for the Attainment of our End. Riches or Poverty, Health or Sicknes, Honour or Contempt, will be chosen or dreaded by us, in such measure as these may more or less contribute to the Service of God, and the Safety of our Souls. For whosoever seeks or covets, or loves, or uses any of the Creatures, farther than thus; he sets up a new End to himself, and forsakes that which he was sent into the World to pursue. And this may be a good Direction for any Man to judge the State of his Soul by. If he attend to his true Business; If his Cares, and Thoughts, and Endeavours, and Discourse, and the whole strain of his Conversation tend this way; If the Degree of his Concern for the Conveniences of Life, answer to that of their Usefulness to his main Point; If his Days be spent in the Study and Service of God, and his Labour be, *To Phil. 2.*  
*Work out his Salvation with Fear and Trembling: 12.*  
This Man is assuredly in a Blessed Condition, his Feet are in a Right Path, and he shall not fail at length to attain that Happiness and Kingdom, which he so zealously aspires after. But if, instead of attending to that great Concern, he turn aside to Vanity, Promotion, or Pleasure, or Wealth, or Fame, the Favour  
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of Princes, the Advancement of his Family, or any thing of no Consequence to this main purpose of his Creation ; If these Trifles employ his Time, his Thoughts, his Talk ; If he Delight more in Them, than in *Seeking the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness*, then his Condition is Exceeding Dangerous ; and no method, but changing his Course entirely, can save him from utter Ruin. For it is not to be imagined, that any Person, employed in a particular piece of Service, and doing no part of that which was given him in Charge, shall ever receive the Reward assigned and promised, only to the due Discharge of that particular Service.

And this now gives us a plain reason of that general destruction of Souls, which moved our Saviour to insinuate, how *Few* are Saved, by calling the Way to Hell and Ruin wide and *Much* frequented ; but that to Salvation narrow and strait, and the Passengers in it very Rare : Which all comes to pass, by that very little Account Men make of that, which is their chief and only Business. For do but observe the Courses they take, and what Designs they pursue, and then tell me, whether this Affair come under their Management, or almost into their Thoughts. How many Thousands do you find, who employ not one half hour in four and twenty, not one day in a Hundred, in the Service of God, and the Concerns of their Soul ? How Infinite are the Men that break their Rest, and Rack their Brains, about the Gains and Conveniences of this World, and how few that make any manner of Provision for the next ? How many find time enough to Eat and Drink, and Sleep, and Dress, and Divert them-

themselves, but are always busie or otherwise indisposed, when they should attend their greatest business? How many Days, and Weeks, and Months, and years, are consumed in sports and pastimes, without any regard of any thing that is wise, and serious, and of real importance to Mankind? How many wretched Women spend more days in a year, in providing Ornaments for their Body, than they do hours in their whole life, in Praying, or Reading, or any other Religious Exercise? And what can become of such People in the End? What will they have to alledge in excuse for this Negligence and Folly, when called to render an account of the Talents committed to their Charge? If a Steward, or a Factor, sent abroad upon his Master's Expence, should return at last with a long Bill, of so much Time and Money laid out, in Singing, Dancing, Drinking, Balls, Plays, Courtship, Hawking, Hunting, or Racing; but when he came to answer what time he had bestowed upon his Master's Affairs, should alledge, that he was so entirely taken up with those other Entertainments, as to have no leisure left for these; Who would not think such a Wretch deserved the severest Punishment, and all manner of Reproach? Think then, what Confusion shall fall upon Them at the last dreadful day, who were sent into the World, to trade for so rich a Prize as the Kingdom of Heaven, and have squandered away all their Time and Thoughts, upon the Trifles of this world, without any care or application for the other?

St Paul attributes the attainment of Mens incorruptible Crown, to their keeping the Goal constantly in view, making up directly to it, and running within those streight Lines, marked

1 Cor. 9<sup>o</sup>

Wisd. 5.7.  
8, 9, 13.

ed out by the Master of the Race. But most of us run after Flies and Feathers, turn out of the way, and spend our strength in the pursuit of Vanity, without any reflection upon our Folly, till it be too late to mend it. Observe how the wise man hath described the Lamentation of those truly unfortunate Persons in Hell, who heaped up Treasures, raised their Families, lived sumptuously, indulged their Ease and Pleasure, and thought themselves wise and happy while they lived. *We wearied our selves in the way of wickedness and destruction, but as for the way of the Lord we have not known it. What hath pride profited us? Or what good have our boasted riches and pomp brought us? All those things are pass'd away like a shadow, and as a Post that hasteth by; but we are consumed in our own Iniquity.* Be not then deluded, my dear Christian Brother, with the false Judgments of those, who magnify and applaud such as are in greatest danger. The Road to *Babylon* will never bring thee to *Jerusalem*. And what a grief will it be to change thy measures, after long labour and toyl in a wrong Course? If a man had travel'd but one whole day, and should be told at night, that all his pains were lost, the loss of a single days journey would afflict him, though his Business were not extremely urgent, and the next day might fetch it up again. But, if his Business were great, if his Life lay upon being at his Journey's end by such an hour precisely, if the loss were irrecoverable, and he so spent, that he could go no further, what a sad perplexity would this be, to find he had run amiss, and was quite out of his way? Now this will be the case, when the night of Death comes, with all who spent their days in vain projects,  
and

and neglected God and their own Souls. They shall find themselves out of the way at the end of their Journey, they have drudged through deep and craggy ways to no purpose, they have lost their time, their labour, and all opportunity to retrieve either; Their Strength is wasted and gone, their Danger unavoidable, their Punishment insupportable, and their Grief and Calamity inconsolable.

Could we but form to our selves a just *Idea* of those inward Terrours, which take hold of the greatest Monarchs at their last hour, after all their Prosperity and Luxury: Could we discern the Thoughts of *Alexander* dying with poyson, or *Julius Caesar* assaulted in the Senate-house, or *Herod* smitten with a noysem and incurable Disease, or that other *Herod* struck with an Angel, and eaten up with Worms, or those many other victorious Princes, who when they come to end a wicked and worldly Life, have quite other notions of things, than the height of their Jollity and Success had ever given them before, these gripes and stings would be so many warnings to us, to provide for our great account, and enter betimes into those thoughts, and that judgment of things, which a death-bed and a nearer prospect of God's dreadful Tribunal, will (when too late perhaps) most certainly awaken in us. Remember then, that what These men are now, thou thy self shalt shortly be: and, that no folly is comparable to that of not profiting by the Examples and Mis-carriages of others. All men will one day agree in a right sense of things. Here only is the difference; that Wise men have it in time, and Fools, when it is too late to do them good. Hadst thou that sense now,

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thou



thou wouldst borrow even from thy meat, and sleep, and most necessary avocations and refreshments, to lay out upon the one thing yet more necessary. The opportunities of reforming are an infinite blessing, and these are yet in thy hand. *The living dog in this respect is better than the dead Lion*, for while Life lasts, matters may still be amended. But this day wears away apace, and the dreadful Night of Death will overtake thee quickly, and then there shall be no more space for Reformation. *Oh that men were wise, that they would understand this, that they would consider their later End; for He is the only Wise man, who is wise to his own Soul.*

The main point in Moral actions is to regard the End, and how comes it to pass, that this most necessary Circumstance is wanting in our Spiritual Concerns? If Heaven be our End, what do we mean to be so fond of Earth; If God be our End, why do we so greedily seek the favour of Men? If the Salvation of an immortal Soul be our End, why do we so eagerly pursue temporal Vanities? *Why do we spend our Money, for that which is not bread, and our Labours for that which satisfieth not?* If we be Heirs of a Kingdom, why do we enslave our selves to the Creatures? If it be our Birthright to eat at our Father's table, why do we delight to feed on husks with Swine. Alas! we may complain with the Wiseman, *The bewitching of naughtiness doth obscure the things that are honest, and the wandrings of Concupiscence undermine the simple mind.* But will the fatal power of this Enchantment excuse us? By no means. *This people is not wise, therefore he that made them will not have mercy on them, and he that formed them will shew them no favour.* This is a folly of Men's

own creating, and they who are seduced by it, shall not only lose their labour, but be punished for their loss.

Think then betimes, what thou wilt do or say, when thy Lord calls in his Talents, and expects an Improvement, when thou shalt hear that dreadful word, *Give an account of thy Stewardship*; for thou mayest be no longer Steward; when God shall come in a day when thou thinkest not, and at an hour when thou lookest not for him, and shall cut the unfaithful servant asunder, and appoint him his portion with Hypocrites and Unbelievers, where shall be weeping and gnashing of Teeth. *Matt. 25.* Examine therefore thy self presently, and state the Account with thy own Conscience: If thou have trifled and wandred hitherto, repent, and return, and redeem the time thou hast already lost. If thou hast not yet considered the weight of this affair, do it immediately; And remember, that speediness in a good resolution is the best Husbandry, the most profitable management, and that the gaining of Crowns and Kingdoms is not a Wisdom to be compared unto it. I will therefore conclude this Chapter, as the Preacher does his Book; *Fear God, and keep his Commandments; for this is the whole of Man.* *i. e.* In this does every man consist. His Beginning, his End, his Life, the reason why he is a Man, is, that he may act and live in obedience to him who made him so, and He who does not this, is no Man in effect. For he loseth all the Benefit of his Creation, his Redemption, his Name, and his Nature. *Ecclef. 12. 14.*

## C H A P. IV.

*Religion that Service of God, which is the End of Man. Of the Christian Religion in particular.*

**A**FTER such proof, that Man was created by God, and in respect of This, and sundry other Benefits, is bound to honour and to serve him, 'tis fit we now enquire, wherein the Service required by God consists. Now all this is usually comprehended under the general Term of Religion; as Piety contains the Duty of Children to Parents, and Obedience that of Servants to their Masters. The Rights of both which Relations God expressly asserts to himself, by one of the Prophets; *The*

*Malach. 1. Son honoureth his Father, and the Servant his Master. If then I be a Father, where is my honour; and if I be a Master, where is my Fear?* The acts of Religion, are many and of different kinds. Some Internal, as Love, and Faith, and Devotion, and Prayer; Some External, as Worship, and Sacrifice, and Vows, and such other things as serve only to testify and declare the Internal. Sometimes again, Religion is meant of all manner of Vertues, and charitable Offices, though they have not immediate Relation to God; and thus St. James tells us, *Pure Religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this; to visit the Widows and Fatherless in their Affliction, and to keep one's self unspotted from the World.* In short, Heathens and Infidels have ever agreed in their notions of this word, and every Sect and

and Opinion, who have professed Reverence and Honour to a Divine Being, did always call that Profession of theirs by the name of Religion. But that Religion which I am now about to treat of in particular, is the Christian: That substance, and form, and way of serving God, revealed to us by Christ and his Apostles; As the only proper and effectual method, of now answering our Duty, and the End of our Creation; for so St. Peter hath instructed us, *There is no other Name under heaven given among Men, whereby we must be saved, but only the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.* Acts, 4. 12

I shall not here run out into nice disquisitions, concerning the State of those, who lived and dyed for two thousand years together, before our Saviour's appearance in the World. It is sufficient, that the Fathers, and those under Moses's Law, believed in a Redeemer to come, as we do in him already come. And, that this Faith was required to be more or less explicit, in proportion as the Discoveries concerning him, were more or less plain and express. They had Ceremonies and Sacraments prefiguring his coming, as we have Sacraments representing that coming already past. He was then the *Expectation of all Nations*. Their Faith in substance was the same with ours; His Merits the same efficient cause of Salvation, though the Circumstances of that Belief, and the manner of applying those Merits, were different then from what now they are. How God will deal with such as had not equal advantage in point of Revelation, we must leave it to his Justice and Mercy to determine. But my business is at present with the Christian Dispensation, under which

which we Live at this day. And, in establishing the truth of this, I shall keep to my former method in the proof of a God. To prove it is requisite, both for the comfort and confirming of those, who already believe, against seducements and temptations; And likewise for awakening the careless, and sensual, who alas! in too great numbers, seem lost to all sense of this Belief, and unmindful of the grounds, upon which it should be entertained. But in the Proof it self, I shall insist (as formerly) upon the Testimony of such Persons as could not be partial, the Confessions of our Enemies, or, else the Records of those, who, living before Christianity came in question, must needs be indifferent in the Cause.

Heb. II. 1. The Apostle observes very truly, *that Faith is the Evidence of things not seen*, such as Reason, and Arguments meerly humane, could never have made clear to us. It is the Assent of things propounded by God, and must be voluntary to make it an act of Obedience. But yet, we are here to proceed upon rational measures; and therefore we are not left destitute of Testimony sufficient, both inward and outward,

Acts, 14. 5. to induce our Belief: *God hath not left himself without witness*. He testifies to the truth of what we believe, by that inward Light and Conviction, that Peace, and Joy, and Consolation in believing. He testifies to it outwardly, by those probable Arguments, and *Motives of Credibility*, (as the Schools speak) which engage the Assent of impartial and considering men. So that, although the Object of Faith do not come to us with the Evidence of Sense or Demonstration, so to leave room for the freedom of our Will, and the Obedience of our  
embrac-

embracing it; yet are there so many Circumstances of Probability, as give us the highest degree of Moral Assurance; and such as every Reasonable man must confess it against all Reason, to mistrust or hold out against.

This is what I shall endeavour to make appear, I hope, to the Readers full satisfaction. And one great point gained toward it already, is the Certainty and Divine Authority of the Old Testament. The Scriptures, which we have received from the profest Enemies of our Faith, which were written many Ages, before the name of Christianity was known in the world. And therefore, whatever I shall alledge out of those Records, cannot but be of singular Credit and Importance to my present purpose. And that is, to shew, that Jesus Christ was the Saviour and Redeemer of Mankind, promised and expected from the beginning of the World; that he was the Son of God, and himself very God; And consequently, that the Doctrine and Religion he hath left us, is true, and the only ordinary way of Salvation now upon Earth. For the clearer manifestation whereof, I shall branch out my Discourse into three heads, suitable to the order of three distinct times, in which the matters to be mentioned fell out. The *First*, shall contain such as happened before our Lord's Incarnation; The *Second*, things done between his Birth and Ascension; The *Last*, such as happened after his departure from Earth, and return to *Heaven*.

## SECT. I.

*How Christ was foretold before his Coming.*

THE Proofs of Christianity, before our Saviour's appearance in flesh, may be distinguished, as they were made to *Jews*, or *Gentiles*. For Christ being appointed from the beginning, indeed before the foundation of the World, to work out the Redemption of *Jew* and *Gentile* both, he was for that reason foretold to both, and each of them had encouragement and warning to expect, and depend upon his appearance.

For the *Jews*, No man can deny that the promises of a *Messias*, run throughout the whole Body of their Scriptures. By which is meant, a person Anointed, and sent by God, to be a Saviour, a Redeemer, a Reconciler, a Mediator between God and Man, a Satisfier for the Sins of the World, a Restorer of the Innocence lost in *Paradise*; a Master, Teacher, and Lawgiver, and finally, a Spiritual King to reign in the Hearts of Men, to subdue the Power and Tyranny of that Common Enemy, who vanquished our first Parents, and makes Assaults upon us daily.

Of this we have Evidence, as antient as that of *Adam's* offence in *Paradise*. For no sooner had he broken that first Covenant, by eating the forbidden fruit, and so rendring himself, and all mankind in Him, obnoxious to the wrath of God, and the power of the Devil; but a Promise of Redemption is given to sustain him, in those words, *The Seed of the Woman*  
shall

Gen. 3.

*shall break the Serpents head.* Which imported, that One in time, should be born of a Woman, who should conquer and trample under foot the Kingdom of Sin and Satan. And thus, not only the eldest *Jews* and *Rabbins* understand this place, of a Spiritual Conquest and Dominion, but the *Chaldee Paraphrase* applies it to the Tempter in these words. *They have a certain and present remedy against thee, O Devil, for the time shall come when they shall tread thee down, by the help of Messias their King.* Maim.  
Tharg.  
Hieros.

The same Promise is repeated afterwards to *Abraham*, about two thousand years after; Gen. 16.  
18. 22. and again to his Son *Isaac*, *In thy seed shall all the Nations of the Earth be blessed.* Which had been but a small Blessing to *Abraham* and those other *Jews*, who never saw this *Messias* in flesh, had he been designed for a temporal King only. And much less still to the *Gentiles*, had this *Messias* been such a King of the *Jews*, as was to destroy and subdue all others to the obedience of this People only, according to the fond imaginations of the later *Rabbins*.

The Patriarch *Jacob* is yet more express, Gen. 49. *The Scepter shall not depart from Judah, till Shiloh, the expectation of the nations come.* Which last words the *Chaldee Paraphrase*, and *Onkelos*, both of great Authority with the *Jews*, interpret thus. Until Christ, or the *Messias* comes, who is the hope and expectation of all Nations, as well of *Gentiles*, as of us that are *Jews*. From which Scripture thus expounded, Two considerable Inferences may be drawn against the later and modern *Jews*. First, That, if their *Messias* was to be the hope and blessing of *Gentiles* as well as *Jews*, then can he not be a temporal King to destroy the *Gentiles*; but a Spiritual



ritual King to reign over them, and subdue the Enemies of their Souls. And *Secondly*, if the Temporal Kingdom of *Judah* must, as in Fact it did, cease, at the coming of the Messias, then is it a very vain conceit, to expect such a Messiah, as should establish, and render that temporal Kingdom everlasting.

During the Bondage of that People in *Egypt*, we find but little upon record concerning them; but about four hundred years after that promise to *Abraham*, God gave them by *Moses* another clear Revelation of the Messias, in these words.

Deut. 18. *I will raise up to this People a Prophet from among their brethren like unto Thee, and will put my words*  
18, 19. *in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that*

Acts. 3. 21. *I shall command him. And it shall come to pass; that whosoever will not hearken unto my words, which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him.*

Now that this cannot be understood of any other Prophet among the *Jews* but *Christ* only, is plain by that other passage, *And there arose not any other Prophet in Israel like unto Moses.*  
Deut. 34. 10.

About four hundred years after *Moses* arose *David*; A holy person, and the first King of the house of *Judah*, to whom the particulars of this mystery, were yet more abundantly revealed; as first, that *Christ* should be born of his stock and lineage; *I have sworn unto David by my Holiness, His seed shall endure for ever, and his Throne as the Sun before me.* Which words, though applied by the later *Jews* to *Salomon*, (as indeed they may be in some sense, so far forth as he was a Type of *Christ*,) yet cannot they be literally and properly true of Him, whose Earthly Throne was rent in pieces, quickly after his death by *Jeroboam*, and after that, utterly overthrown. They must therefore

Psal. 89.  
35, 36.

of necessity be understood of an Eternal King to be born of *David's Seed* ; as must also those other Passages. *Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. I will give thee the Heathen for thine inheritance, and the utmost parts of the Earth for thy Possession.* Which were never fulfilled in *Solomon*, nor any temporal King in *Jewry* after him. And much less were these that follow ; *They shall fear thee as long as the Sun and Moon endure throughout all generations. In his days shall the Righteous flourish, and abundance of Peace, so long as the Moon endureth. He shall have dominion also from Sea to Sea, and from the river unto the ends of the Earth. All Kings shall fall down before him, all Nations shall do him service. All Posterities shall be blessed through him, and all the Heathen shall praise him.* These words of Christ's Kingdom enduring to the world's end, of his universal dominion, his adoration by all Nations, his making all the posterities and families of the Earth blessed, cannot be applied to any King, that ever was, or shall be, among the *Jews*, but to Christ only.

Psal. 2.  
7, 8.

Psal. 72.5.  
7, 8, 11, 17.

Jerem. 23.  
5, 6.

This Promise of Christ to come of *David's Seed* is repeated and confirmed by many Prophecies, particularly that of *Jeremy* ; *Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgement and justice in the Earth : In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely ; and this is his name whereby he shall be called, The Lord our Righteousness.* Now it is observable that this seed is promised here to *David*, as a blessing still to come ; four hundred years after *David* was dead ; And consequently this could not be meant of *Solomon*, or any temporal King of that Line ;

Line; but of Christ only, who was called in a peculiar manner, *The Seed and Son of David*; because *David* was the first King of the Tribe of *Judah*, and not only his Ancestor after the flesh, but in many things a special Type and Figure of him. Upon the account, of which resemblance it is, that *Ezekiel* calls the Messiah by the name of *David* himself; *I will save my flock, and I will set up one Shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my Servant David, he shall feed them, and he shall be their Shepherd. And I the Lord will be their God, and my servant David a Prince among them; And I will make with them a Covenant of Peace.* The Jews themselves confess the Messiah here meant by *David*, so called as a descendent from him. And so in reason it must be for; *David*, who had been then four hundred years dead, could not come again to feed God's People, and govern them in his own person.

Ezek. 34.  
22, 23, 24,  
25.

Thalmud.  
Tract.  
Sanh. Co-  
hel.

Isa. 2. 2,  
3, 4.

Mica. 4.

*Isaiah*, who lived about a hundred years before *Jeremy* and *Ezekiel*, was wonderfully enlightened, concerning the Messiah, and the State of Affairs under him, which he describes after this manner. *In the last days the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the Hills; and all Nations shall flow unto it. And many People shall go and say, Come ye and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his Paths: And he shall judge among the Nations.* The same is repeated by *Micah*, and applyed also there to the Messiah; and can have no other meaning, by the confession of the very Jews themselves. The same is foretold by *Isaiah* in sundry other Chapters, where, speaking of the Messiah, he says,

In

In that day shall the Branch of the Lord be glorious, *Isai. 4. 1.*  
 and the fruit of the Earth shall be excellent and come-  
 ty. The Branch of the Lord, because the *Messias*  
 should be God; the fruit of the Earth, because he  
 should be Man. And in the ninth Chapter, he *Isai. 9. 6.*  
 styles Him, *Wonderful, Counsellour, the Mighty*  
*God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.*  
 In the Eleventh, he calls Him the Rod out of the *Isai. 11. 1.*  
 Stem of Jesse, and the Branch growing out of his to 11.  
 Roots; and gives a large description of the ex-  
 cellent Spirit, which should rest upon Him, and  
 the many wonderful happy effects of His Go-  
 vernment. Of this Person again he declares,  
 That He should swallow up Death in victory, That *Ch. 25. 8.*  
 He should open the Eyes of the blind, and unstop the *35. 5.*  
 Ears of the deaf; that He should not cry, nor lift  
 up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the streets: *Ch. 42. 2,*  
 that He should not break the bruised reed, nor quench *3. 4.*  
 the smoking flax; that He should bring forth judg-  
 ment unto truth and not fail, nor be discouraged:  
 And, for the extent of his Commission, he in-  
 troduces God the Father speaking thus, *It is a*  
*light thing that thou should'st be my servant, to raise* *Ch. 49. 6.*  
*up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved* *Luke 2.*  
*of Israel; I will also give thee for a light, to the* *31, 32.*  
*Gentiles, that thou may'st be my Salvation unto the* *Acts 13.*  
*end of the Earth.* *47.* The Prophecies of this kind  
 are infinite; but that of *Daniel* is most express  
 concerning the time of the *Messiah's* coming and *Dan. 9. 24,*  
 death: And He indeed is the common Point, in *25, 26.*  
 which the Signs and Figures, the Parables and  
 Prophecies of the Old Testament center; all  
 which conspire from time to time in signifying  
 to the *Jews*, that *Christ* should come, that his  
 Kingdom should be spiritual, and that it should  
 never have an end.

I pass now to consider, *Secondly*, the Quality of *Christ's* Person, which is a Point of equal Importance with the former; and that, wherein the later *Jews* dissent from us, which is, that the Prophecies alledged before do prove, that the *Christ* must be *God*, and the Son of *God*, taking upon Him our Nature, that is, both *God* and *Man*. For so in *Genesis*, *The Seed of the Woman* declares Him to be *Man*; and *Breaking the Serpent's head*, implies Him to be *God*; since no finite or created Power, is sufficient for such a Conquest. By the *Branch of the Lord*, as I said, His Godhead, and by the *Fruit of the Earth*, His Manhood is signified, whose *Kingdom is everlasting as the Sun and Moon*. Who is He, whose Generation none can declare? Whom all the *Angels of Gods* are commanded to worship; who is seated at the right hand of *God*? To whom do these, and many other such Excellencies and Privileges belong, but to *God* only? The last of these Instances, our Saviour is said to have posed the *Pharisees* with, by asking, If *Christ* was *David's Son*, how *David in Spirit* could call him *Lord*? signifying hereby that the *Messias*, who, according to his Humane Nature, was to be *David's Son*; yet, with regard to his Divine Nature, the same was *David's Lord*. And so *R. Jonathan*, and the publick Commentaries of the *Hellin in Psal.* brews intepret that Psalm. The Prophet *Micah* is exprefs, that the *Ruler, to be born in Bethlehem* (which the *Jews* unanimously agreed to be *Christ*) was one, whose goings out are from everlasting. And such no mere *Man* ever was, or can be: *Esay* declares the Child born to be *God*, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. *David* calls him *God*, by the same Word, which in the same Text is apply'd to *God the Father*:

*Iſal.* 53.  
*Pſal.* 97.  
*Pſal.* 90.  
*Matt.* 22.

*Jonath.*  
*Collet.* &  
*Mid. Tehil.*  
*lim in Psal.*  
2. 7.  
*Mic.* v. 2.

*Iſai.* 9. 6.  
*Iſai.* 45.  
7.

even

even *Jehovah*, acknowledg'd by the Jews to be the incommunicable Name of the one only true God, is given to him by *Jeremy*, as the ancient Hebrews confess: One of whom says, 'In this place *Jehovah* signifies nothing else but the *Messias*'s expounding *Zephaniah*. III. 9. And many other Testimonies of *Rabbies* and *Cabalists*, might be produc'd to the same purpose.

It is farther observable, That the ancient Jews, and some of the latter too, do hold and prove from Scripture, that the *Christ* shall be the Son, or Word of God incarnate. *Rab. Kimchi* hath a long Discourse to shew, that the *Shiloh* in *Jacob*'s Prophecy, is the Son of God. The Person, call'd by *Isaiah* the Lord's Branch, is by the *Chaldee* Paraphrase styl'd the *Messias* of *Jehovah*. Those Passages in the Psalms, *He shall say, Thou art my Father; I have made him my first-born, higher than the Kings of the Earth; Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee; Kiss the Son, lest he be angry; Blessed are all they that put their trust in him,* are alledg'd by *R. Jonathan*, *R. Nathan*, *R. Selomoth*, *Aben-ezra*, and others, to prove that the *Messias* must be the very Son of God. And the last Passage cannot be understood of any common Son of Man, because it is written, *Cursed be the Man that trusteth in Man, and maketh* Jer. 17. 5. *Flesh his Arm.* Thus they likewise affirm him to be the Word of God the Father. Where *Esaias* says, *Israel shall be saved in the Lord, with an everlasting salvation; where Jehovah, or the Lord, is confess'd to signify Christ.* *Jonathan* turns it, *Israel shall be saved by the Word of God.* *Hosea* saith, *I will save the house of Judah by Jehovah the Lord their God.* *Jonathan*, *I will save Judah by the Word of their God.* *David*, *The Lord said to my Lord: Jonathan, The Lord said unto his Word,*

Jer. 23. 6.  
R. Abba.  
Comm. in  
Lament.  
Madr Te-  
hill. in Psal.  
20. Mos.  
Hadar. an.  
in Gen. 41.

Kimchi in  
Radic.  
Tharg. in  
Isai.

Psal. 89.  
26, 27.  
Psal. 2. 7,  
12.

Jer. 17. 5.  
Isa. 14. 17

Chald.  
Paraphr.  
Hos. 17.

Psa. 110. 1.

In 47. Gen. Sit thou on my right hand: And R. Isaac. Arama,  
In 10. Ge. in his Comment upon Genesis, expounds that  
nesis. Passage, He sent his Word, and healed them; by

God's sending the Messias, who is God's Word:  
Job 19. 25. And R. Simeon, upon that of Job, I shall see God  
in my flesh, infers, that the Word of God should  
take flesh of a Woman. Nay, which is yet  
more, some Doctors of great Authority among  
the Jews, have interpreted that Passage of Dem.

R. 1bba. &

R. Simeon  
in Zoar.

4. 6. and Isa. 6. 3. of the Trinity of Persons in  
Unity of Essence: and say, That the Three Je-  
hovahs in One, and the Three Holies in the other;  
are as if the Prophet had said, Holy Father, or  
God the Father; Holy Son, or God the Son;  
Holy Spirit, or God the Spirit: which Three  
Holies, make but One only Lord God of Sabaoth.

Once more: This Dispute between us and  
the Jews, receives great Light and Authority,  
from their Learned Philo; one of the greatest  
Men that wrote of their Nation, after the Inspi-  
ration of Scripture ceased. And he, in his Book  
of the Banishment of the Jews, hath Words  
to this effect; 'What time may be appointed  
'for our Return home, is hard to be determin'd  
'Tradition tells us, We must wait for the death  
'of a High Priest; but of these some die sooner,  
'some later: But I am of Opinion, this High  
'Priest shall be the Very Word of God, who shall  
'be void of all Sin, whether voluntary, or in-  
'voluntary; whose Father shall be God, and this  
'Word shall be the Wisdom of that Father, by  
'which all things in this World were created.  
'His Head shall be anointed with Oyl, and his  
'Kingdom shall flourish and shine for ever. This  
was written by Philo, when he little thought  
that the High Priest, whom he so much expect-  
ed, the same Word of God, whose Kingdom he

describ'd, was then already come into the World. And thus much shall suffice for our Second Consideration, what manner of *Messias* was foretold to, and expected by the *Jews*.

3. The *Third* thing to be enquired into, is the Power and Authority of this *Messias*; and whether he should change or set aside the Law of *Moses*: which is another Point contested by the *Jews*, no less eagerly than the former. For we affirm, with *St. Paul*, That the Law of *Moses* Galat. 3. was intended to entertain the *Jews* only for a time, by it's outward Signs and Ceremonies; that it was their *Schoolmaster to lead them to Christ*, to fit them for a Dispensation of Faith; and then, that it should be laid aside, and a far more perfect Law establish'd in it's stead. We Hebr. 10. prove, That the Law of *Moses*, was an imper- Acts 15. fect Law; that it was a Burden too heavy for the Hebr. 9. *Jews* themselves to bear: A Carnal Command- Hebr. 10. ment, consisting principally of external Ser- Deut. 13. vices: A Law of Terrour and Fear, not of 14. Love and a Free-Spirit: A Shadow and Figure Lev. 4. and of things to come; and consequently was to 23. Exod. cease, when the things so prefigured were actu- 23. Deut. ally present: A Law peculiar to that People, and to be exercised only in that Countrey; nay great part of it, but in one place of that Countrey neither.

Now then, say We, How is it possible, that a Law, made for the *Jews* and their Land only, should serve for the Times of the *Messias*, which were to take in all the Nations of the whole Earth? How could the Festivals and Sacrifices, allowed to be celebrated and offered only at *Jerusalem*, be observed by Christians dispersed every where over the World? Is it not therefore manifest, that this Law, to use *St. Paul's* words,



- Hebr. 7. 19. *was only the bringing in of a better hope ? contrived to wean that People, prone to Idolatry, from the Corruptions of Egypt, by outward and bodily observances, till Christ should come and ordain a perfect Law ; a Law of Spiritual and inward perfection; a Law of Love and Liberty; a Law common to all men, and fitted for every Place and Person; a Law supportable and easie, sweet, and light, plain, and brief, and sensible; a Law for the poor as well as the rich, and in a word, a Law of Faith working by Charity? In this the Great Prophet to be raised to that people resembled Moses, in that he was to be a Lawgiver ; but more to be heard and obeyed, in proportion as the Law he gave was more excellent. Now no other Prophet arose before like unto Moses, because none of them had authority to impose Laws as Moses did ; but were all bound to observe that Law, which he had left them ; till Christ came, who was like Moses in this authority of imposing a new Law, and superseding that which he found already in use. Hence is that Prediction of the Messiah's*
- Isai. 2. 3. *Kingdom, Out of Sion shall go forth the Law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. Which cannot be meant of Moses's Law published eight hundred years before, and setting out, not from Sion, but Sinai: But of Christ's Law it is true, that This began from Sion, and Jerusalem, and from thence was spread over the whole World. Hence the same Prophet says of that time, In*
- Isai. 19. 19, 21. *that day shall there be an Altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt; and the Lord of Hosts shall be known to Egypt in that day, and the Egyptians shall do sacrifice and oblation. Which could not be true of the Law of Moses, for by that Law the Egyptians could not have Altar or Sacrifice :*

crifice : But it was accomplished at Christ's Coming, when that Nation became Christians, and enjoy'd such an Altar and Sacrifice, as our Religion makes use of.

The same is again foretold by God in *Mal. 1.*  
*lachi, I have no pleasure in you, neither will I* *10, 11.*  
*accept your offering; For, from the rising of the*  
*Sun, even to the going down of the same, my*  
*name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in*  
*every place incense shall be offered to my name and*  
*a pure offering: for my name shall be great among*  
*the Heathen, saith the Lord of Hosts.* Here we  
 have First a Rejection of the Jewish Sacrifices,  
 and consequently of the Mosaic Law which in-  
 stituted it; and Secondly a promise of acceptance  
 to the Gentiles, in a Worship more grateful than  
 the former, such as might be performed every  
 where, and was not confined to one single  
 place, as the Jewish Sacrifices had been. In a  
 word, God declares, he had given to the Israe- *Ezek. 20.*  
 lites Statutes that were not good, and judgments *25.*  
 whereby they should not live, i. e. such as had no  
 intrinsic virtue of their own, nor were of per-  
 petual obligation; but only to last, till the pe-  
 riod appointed for them; Concerning which *Jerem. 31.*  
 he says by the Prophet Jeremy, Behold the days *31.*  
 come, when I will make a new Covenant with the  
 house of Israel, and with the house of Judah; not  
 according to the Covenant, that I made with their fa-  
 thers, in the day that I brought them forth out of the  
 Land of Egypt. So that, at the coming of Christ,  
 which is treated of at large in that Chapter,  
 there was to be a New Covenant, And this, in  
 Terms and Conditions different from the for-  
 mer Covenant, which God had struck with that  
 people at their passage out of Egypt to the Holy  
 Land.

And now upon the whole matter, we see, that Christ was foretold, promised, and prefigured from the beginning of the world ; that he was to be real God, as well as Man ; that he came with Authority to Change the Law of *Moses*; which, in the very nature and design of it, was but a Temporary and National Law; and to Establish Another, a new Covenant of his own, calculated for all times, and places, and intended to continue for ever.

These things must in reason be acknowledged wonderful, and sufficient to engage the Belief of all, who should see the accomplishment of them, ( which my *Second* Section shall prove by and by ) but I have yet one thing more to urge, which is, the very particular predictions of every important Act, Event, or Circumstance, in the Coming, Incarnation, Birth, Life, Death, and Resurrection of our Blessed Lord. For instance, The particular time when he should appear in the World, ( *Gen.* 49. 10. *Dan.* 9. 26. ) His being born of a Virgin, ( *Isa.* 7. 14. ) The place of his Birth, ( *Mich.* 5. 2. ) The Murder of the Infants in the Coasts of *Bethlehem*. ( *Jerem.* 31. 15. ) The Eastern Princes coming to adore and offer him Gifts, ( *Psal.* 72. 10. ) His presentation in the Temple at *Jerusalem*, ( *Mal.* 3. 1. ) His flight into *Egypt*, and return thence, ( *Hos.* 11. 2. ) *John Baptist's* preparing his way in the Desert, ( *Isai.* 40. 3. *Malach.* 3. 1. ) His humility, and gentleness of Spirit in the discharge of his Office, ( *Isai.* 42. 2. ) His Miracles and Cures of Infirmities and Diseases, ( *Isai.* 29. 8. 35. 8. 61. 1. ) Dying for the Sins of the whole World, ( *Isai.* 53. *Dan.* 9. 26. ) Being betrayed by his own Disciple  
( *Psal.*

(*Psal.* 41. 10. 55. 14. 109. 8.) Sold for thirty pieces of Silver, (*Zech.* 11. 12.) The buying a Field with the price of his blood, (*Jer.* 30.) His triumphant Entry into Jerusalem upon an Ass, (*Zech.* 9. 9.) The Buffeting and spitting upon his Face, (*Isai.* 50. 6.) The scourging and tearing his Body before his Death, (*Isai.* 53. ) Dying between Malefactors, (*Isai.* 53. 12.) The Vinegar given him to drink, the dividing his Clothes, and the Lots cast for his Coat, (*Psal.* 69. 22. 22. 19.) His resurrection from the dead the third day, (*Psal.* 16. 9, 10. *Hof.* 6. 3.) His Ascent into Heaven, and sitting at the right hand of God, (*Psal.* 68. 19. 110. 1.)

These, and many more particulars relating to the Messiah, were revealed in Scripture, some four, some two, some one thousand, and the last of all, above four hundred years, before Christ was born. And, if we lay all these things together, and consider withal how exactly they were fulfilled in our Jesus, (as I shall shortly shew,) If we add, that these Prophecies are handed down by the most profest and inveterate Enemies of Christianity, and the same to a Tittle in their Bibles, as we have them in Ours; If we reflect upon the invincible Evidence, produced before, of the Certainty and Evidence of the Old Testament Writings; we must needs be convinced, that it is scarce possible to imagine any thing could be done for the manifestation of any Truth, before it come to pass, which was not done for the signification of the Messiah his Coming into the World.

After all these Considerations peculiar to the Jews, I shall very briefly say somewhat with regard to the Gentiles. They indeed were

to

to receive their principal Knowledge of this matter from the *Jewish* Nation, to whom the *Messias* was first and chiefly promised: And from whom the *Gentiles* must await for our Saviour and his Apostles, as well as the Scriptures which bore witness to them both. Their certain and sound understanding in the Mysteries of Christ must come from hence: But yet they had some particular warnings among themselves too; which, when joyn'd with that already said of the *Jews*, makes much for confirmation of the Christian Truth. And for the better understanding this matter, we may observe, that besides those Intimations of the *Messias*, which might be gathered from the *Hebrew* Scriptures, translated into *Greek* many Ages before Christ was born, besides what might be gained by conversing with the *Jews* in their dispersions and captivities, there were Three ways of letting the *Gentiles* into these Mysteries. The *First* by Tradition and Writings of their Ancestors. The *Second* by Prophecies of their own. The *Third*, by the Warnings and Confessions of their Idols and Oracles, especially upon the approach of Christ's Birth into the World.

*First*, It is evident, that, as the *Jews* had many things by Succession, from their Forefathers, They from *Moses*, and He from the *Patriarchs*; so the *Gentiles* had a succession of Doctrines from the Beginning. Though, the lower they went, the more corrupt they grew; and were darkned in Divine Knowledge by the prevailing Idolatry of the Heathen World. The *Romans*, we know, derived their Learning from the *Grecians*; They from the *Egyptians*; These from the *Chaldeans*, who were the *First* People

People instructed in Divine Knowledge from *Adam*, *Methusalem*, and *Noah*, and others of the First Fathers. Euse. b. Chron.

Now Chronologers agree, that Three famous Men lived together in those antient Times. *Abraham*, the common Father of the Jewish Nation; *Job*, whom we know by his Book to have been a most holy and excellent Person: And *Zoroaster*, whom we only know to have been a learned man, and to have left great Testimonies of this to Posterity. This *Zoroaster* might very well be acquainted with *Noah*, for *Abraham* was born above threescore years before *Noah's* death; *Noah* was born five Hundred years before *Methuselah* dyed, and *Methuselah* lived more than two hundred years with *Adam*. It is not therefore unlikely, that *Abraham*, *Job*, and *Zoroaster*, and others of their Contemporaries, might be instructed in the Mysteries of Religion, at the third hand from God himself. By *Noah* and his Sons I mean, who had lived before the Flood, and seen *Methusalem*, who lived many years with *Adam*. Hence I suppose it is, that in *Zoroaster's* Writings, produced by Authors of repute, many plain indications of the Son of God are to be found, whom he calls the *Second Mind*. And by the Writings of *Hermes Trismegistus*, (who lived afterwards in Egypt, and had his Learning from *Zoroaster*,) we find those Heathen Philosophers to have received a clear notion of the *Second Person* in the Trinity, whom *Hermes* styles, *The First begotten Son of God*, his only Son, his dear, eternal, immutable, and incorruptible Son, whose name is ineffable. After him again the old Greek Poets, *Orpheus*, *Hesiod*, and others, express themselves to the same purport concerning the Son of God. Clem. Alex Strom. 1. Origen, cont. Cels. 6. Procl. 2, and 3. in Parm. Plat. in Pzma. & deinceps.

God. And so did the *Platonists*, too tedious to be alledged here, and therefore I refer my Reader to *Origen's* Book against *Celsus*, and *St. Cyril's* First book against *Julian the Apostate*.

For the *Second* way, their Prophecies, *Lactantius* hath collected the Prophecies of the *Sibyls*, wherein the Birth, Life, Death, Glory and Judgment of the Son of God are described at large. These are alledged by the gravest and most learned of the Fathers. *Justin Martyr*, *Origen*, *Arnobius*, *Lactantius*, *St. Cyril*, *St. Augustin*, and *Constantine* the Emperour; and may be consulted at my Reader's leisure: But I insist not on these, because their Authority is now so much disowned by Learned Men.

The *Third* way I mentioned, as peculiar to the *Gentiles*, is the Confession of Idols and Oracles. Especially, when the season of Christ's appearance drew on, and they began to feel the overruling influence of his Power and Virtue. Sundry instances of this kind might be produced, but I shall content my self with two.

Suid. in  
Thullis.  
Porphyr,  
& Plu-  
tarch. de  
Oracul.

The *First*, that Answer of *Apollo* to one of his own Priests, consulting him about God and the true Religion. *O thou unhappy Priest, why dost thou enquire of me concerning God, the Father of all things, and concerning this most renowned King's dear and only Son, and of the Spirit that containeth all? Alas! That Spirit will constrain me shortly to desert this habitation and place of Oracles.*

The Other to *Augustus Caesar* a little before Christ's Birth. Who, now beginning to decline apace, and curious to know, who should reign after him, would needs apply to the Delphick Oracle for Information. *Apollo*, after long Silence uttered these surprising words.

Suid. in  
vit. Au-  
gust. Ni-  
ceph. l. i. c.

*A Hebrew Child, who ruleth over the Gods, commandeth me to leave this dwelling, and repair to hell. But do you however depart in Silence from my Altars. Thus the Evil Spirit, though forced to confess his Impotence, was desirous to save his Credit, and therefore prohibited the revealing this Secret. With which however Augustus much confounded, is said, upon his return to Rome, to have erected an Altar inscribed, The Altar of the First begotten Son of God.*

And Thus I have shewn, that the Coming of the Messias was signified both to Jew and Gentile, by all the Methods that in reason could be expected or devised. By Prophecies, Signs, Types, Ceremonies, Traditions, and by the forced Confession of Idols themselves. Nay, not his coming only, but the End of it; To be a Saviour of the World, to dye for Sin, to ordain a new Law, and institute a more perfect Society of Men. The Manner of his coming, The Time of his appearance; and all this, before Christ or Christians were known in the World. It remains now, that we examine, whether these Circumstances, foretold so long before, do really agree in our Jesus, whom We believe to be the true Messias. And this shall be the Subject of the following Sections.

## SECT.



## S E C T. II.

*How the former Predictions were fulfilled in our Jesus, while upon Earth.*

There is a great difference to be observed in the Controversy, concerning the *Christian Religion*, according as the Enemies we have to deal with, be *Jews* or *Gentiles*. The *Gentile* disagreeeth with us in all the Points here alledged; but the *Jew* in several of them stands with us, and for us. He offereth his Life in defence of our Principles, but is never to be reconciled to our Application of those Principles. Nor will he be moved by Scripture or Reason, to allow, That they were, or can be made good in our *Jesus*. And in this Obstinacy he exceeds the *Gentiles*; for as soon as They come to understand the Prophecies and Promises in the Old Testament, they make little difficulty in believing the Accomplishment of them in the New: And few of these, since our Saviour's time, have become *Jews*, who have not shortly after been brought over to be *Christians*.

And yet this very Opposition of the *Jews*, is a great Argument for *Jesus*, and the Truth of his Religion. For this likewise was foretold long ago, *The same Stone which the builders refused, is become the Head-stone of the Corner: This is the Lord's doing, and marvellous in our Eyes.* And not only *David*, but *Isaiah* complains greatly of the Incredulity of that People; and their inflexible opposition against the *Messiah* and his Doctrine; insomuch that this peremptory Refusal is for our advantage; and whomsoever that

Psalm. 118.  
22, 23.  
Isa. 6. 28.  
53.

that Nation should readily receive and acknowledge, would have this great Argument against his being the true *Messias*. But yet to satisfy the World how little ground there is for such Unbelief, I shall with all convenient Brevity run over the chief Circumstances relating to *Jesus*, while upon Earth: And, by the Testimony of his Enemies themselves, examine, Whether the Prophecies and Signs of the *Messias*, were not duly fulfilled in Him and his Actions. The whole of which Consideration shall be reduced to these *Four Heads*. (1.) How the time prophesied of the *Messiah's* appearance suits with that of our Lord's coming. (2.) The particulars of his Birth and other Events, before he began to Preach. (3.) His Life, Miracles, and Doctrine. And (4.) Lastly, His Death, Resurrection, and Ascent into Heaven.

1. *First*. For the time at which our Saviour came into the world, it is agreed by all, whether Pagan, Jewish, or Christian Writers, to have been while *Augustus* was Emperour, toward the End of his Reign, and when *Herod* ruled in *Judea*. The Three Monarchies of *Assyria*, *Persia*, and *Greece*, were then ended; and the Fourth, that of the *Romans*, greater than any of the former was then (according to *Daniel's* Prophecy) in it's most flourishing state. The Civil Wars were composed, and, after infinite bloodshed and confusion, an universal peace settled. Which agrees exactly with that time assigned by *Daniel*, for the *Messiah's* appearance, to set up an everlasting Kingdom throughout all the World. Dan. 2.

2. *Isaiah* had likewise foretold, ( more than a *Isai. 9. 6*, hundred years before *Daniel* ) that Christ should 7. be a Prince of Peace, that of his Government and Peace

*Peace there should be no End, and David, long before Him, that, in his days should be abundance of Peace.* Which expressions though chiefly regarding the tranquillity of men's minds, yet (considering, how necessary an outward peace was, for the quiet planting of the Gospel, and, after how wonderful and surprising a manner this was brought about, when the *Roman Empire* was so fresh;) even This is a great Argument, that such a time was very proper for the Messiah's coming, so far as concerns the state of the World in general.

3. If we descend to the condition of the *Jewish Nation* in particular, we shall find an exact accomplishment of old *Jacob's Prophecy*, concerning the Scepter departing from *Judah*, at *Shiloh's* coming. *Herod an Idumean Stranger*, having just then extinguished the Government of that Line, and by many wicked Arts and Murders usurp'd it to himself, which is the first time the Succession had fail'd in that Tribe, from the days of *David*, the first King of it. Till the Captivity the Scripture shews the descent of all their Kings, during their stay in *Babylon*, they were permitted to choose a Governour of that house, whose Title was *Reschgalutha*. After their return, *Zorobabel* was their Chief; and Others down to the *Maccabees*. From whom down to *Hircanus* and *Aristobulus*, whom *Herod* slew, the same Line continued in command, as *Josephus* hath assured us. So that, by this Prophecy, it is plain, Jesus was born at a proper time, appointed for the Messiah, when there was neither Prince nor Governour left of that Tribe, and the *Jews* descended from it ceased to be a settled People or Common-wealth quickly after.

Another

8. Another Prophecy affirms, That the *Messias* should come, before the second Temple (built by *Zorobabel*, upon the *Jews* return from the *Babylonish Captivity*) should be destroy'd by the *Romans*. *Haggai* the Prophet comforts the Builders, and the People, in these words; *The Silver* Haggai 2.  
*is mine, and the Gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts.* 8, 9.  
*The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts.* Now the difficulty is, in what respect this Temple excelled the former; not in Pomp and Magnificence, or any thing preferable in the building or Ornaments; for we are told, *The Old Men* Ezra 3.  
*wept, who remembred the former Temple,* 12, 13.  
*and saw this so much inferiour to it: And this very Promise is design'd to take off that Grief; for thus it begins, Who is there among you, that saw* Ver. 4.  
*this house in her first glory, and how do ye see it now? Is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing? Yet now be strong, &c.* And hence God mentions the *Silver and Gold*, as his; to shew, that the abundance, or the want of these were of no consideration with him: And, notwithstanding the meanness of the *Fabrick*, *this house should be filled with glory; nay, with greater Glory than the former; by some other way, preferable to the Sumptuousness of the Building.* But, besides this difference, the Learned *Jews* observe five things of great Importance, which added much to the dignity of the former Temple, to have been all wanting in this Second. The Fire sent from Heaven to consume the *Burnt-offerings*; The Glory of God, or bright Cloud between the *Cherubim*; The Spirit of Prophecy; The Presence of the *Ark*; and the *Urim and Thummim*. So that, all these Preheminences being lost, there remains

no other account to be given of this, than the actual presence of God incarnate, that is, the Messias, in his own Temple: And so the accomplishment of *Malachi's* Prophecy, *Behold I will send my Messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me; and the Lord shall suddenly come to his Temple, even the Messenger of the Covenant whom ye delight in, behold he shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts.* The meaning whereof must needs be, that Christ must appear in the Second Temple, as Jesus really did, and consequently be born before that Temple was destroyed, so that he cannot be still to come, now that, that Temple hath been finally demolished for more than sixteen hundred years: Which final destruction it is likewise remarkable, that *Daniel* hath determined to a short time, after the birth and death of the Messias. And History shews that *Jerusalem* was destroyed, and the Foundations of the Temple raz'd by *Titus*, about forty years after Jesus was put to death. Concerning which Prophecy of *Daniel*, where the end of the Jewish Policy is determined to *seventy weeks*, it shall suffice to observe, that the Jews computed, sometimes by Weeks of Days, and sometimes by Weeks of Years. That the former could not be meant here, is plain, because there are but seven Weeks assigned for building of the Temple and the City, which were not finished under forty nine years. That is, seven Weeks of Years. And this Reckoning falls in right with the Death of our Jesus, and the sacking of *Jerusalem* by the *Romans*. But either Reckoning must be so long since expired, as to take away all ground for the Jews expectation of a Messias still to come.

*Mala.* 3.1.

*Dan.* 9.  
26, 27.

See *Levit.*  
23 & 25.  
*Dan.* 10.  
2.

This Time of our Lord's Birth receives farther Confirmation, from the Traditions and Observations of the antient *Jews*, which all centered about the time of *Augustus* his Reign. The *Thalmud* frequently mentions a Tradition of one *Elias*, that the World should last six thousand years. Two thousand before the Law, Two under the Law, and Two more afterwards, under the *Messias*. Which last period could not, by all computation, commence far from the Birth of *Jesus*. And the *Rabbins* long since complained, that there seemed to be there more than seven hundred years past, since the time, when the *Messias*, according to Scripture predictions ought to appear, and therefore they wonder'd what should move God to defer his coming so long. *Maimonides* a Person, of mighty reputation, and stiled the *Teacher of Righteousness* among the *Jews*, who lived about the year of Christ 1140, thinks the time for the *Messiah's* appearance to have been lapsed at least a thousand years, according to the Scripture Prophecies; and that God delays this Blessing, as a punishment for the sins of his People. And *Elias* says, that Christ was to be born indeed before the destruction of the Second Temple, but yet, says he, for our sins he hides himself for a Season, till we be worthy of his coming. So that Scripture, Tradition, Observation, all agree that about *Herod's* Time, the *Messias* was to be born. Hence grew that publick Fame mentioned by *Tacitus*, *Suetonius*, and *Josephus*, of an universal Lord over the whole World. Which Prophecy some of the *Romans* contemned, others applied it to *Vespasian*; and *Herod* feared it so much, that for this reason he took special care to extinguish all the Line of *David*.

*Thalmud.*  
*Tract. Sanh.*  
*cap. helec.*  
& alib.

*Thalmud.*  
*Tract.*  
*Avodazara*  
*Maimon. E-*  
*pist. ad Jud.*  
*Afric.*

*Thalmud.*  
*Tract. San.*  
*c. Helec.*

*Tacit. L. 2.*  
*Suet. in*  
*Vesp. Joseph*  
*de Bel.*  
*Jud. L. 7.*  
*c. 11.*

This made the Wisemen so intent upon the Star at our Lord's Birth, and the Scribes and Pharisees so inquisitive, whether John were the Christ; this occasion'd that question to our Lord himself, *How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly.* This, Lastly, gave so many Seducers opportunity to impose upon the People with lying Pretences, as Judas, Theudas, and others. All which false Christs it is very observable, set up for themselves, between the time of Herod's attaining to the Government, and the destruction of Jerusalem: That being the time, when the Christ was generally expected, and so, then the People were ready to take such Impressions of Deceit.

Since then, ( to conclude this First particular ) there met so many signs and arguments together, about the time of Jesus his Birth, as, The general Peace of the Roman Empire; The Translation of the Government from Judah; The destruction of the second Temple; The just calculation of Daniel's Weeks; The Observations and Traditions of Rabbi's; The universal expectation of the Jews; And now the palpable experience of more than sixteen hundred years, since our Jesus his appearance, wherein the Jews in vain expect another Messias; since they are dispersed over the face of the whole Earth, without Temple, or Law, or Sacrifice, or Prophet, or Promise of Restauration; (which never happened to them in any of their Exiles, Captivities, or Desolations, before the death of Jesus;) These things laid fairly together, give us abundant and undoubted ground to conclude, that Jesus was born at the precise time appointed; and foretold by God's Holy Spirit, and consequently, that he was the Only, the True Messias,  
and

and Saviour of the World. A Truth which will be yet more fully evinced by my

II. Second Consideration, which relates, to his Family, his Conception, his Birth, Circumcision, Being worshipped by the Wisemen, Presented in the Temple, and carried by Flight into *Egypt*.

1. As to his Lineage; No man ever denied Jesus to be descended of the Tribe of *Judah*, and of the House of *David*. This is proved in the Genealogies in *St. Matthew*, and *St. Luke*. Matt. 1. Luke, 3. Luke, 2. Confirmed by his Mother and reputed Father going up to *Bethlehem* the City of *David*, to be taxed. The Scribes and Pharisees and unbelieving *Jews*, who objected his being a Carpenter's Son, are never found to have objected against him, that he was not of the Family of *David*. And yet this, could it have been made out, would have been a weightier Point than all the rest, and have put an end at once to the Controversy, whether he were the very *Messias*. Nay, the *Jewish Talmud* it self declares, That *Jesus of Nazareth who was Crucified, was of the Blood Royal from Zorobabel, of the house of David*. Thalmud. tract. Sanhed. Nigmarhad.

2. The Manner of his Conception, and the Message of the Angel, does indeed principally depend upon the relation and credit of the Virgin her self, who alone was privy to it; and upon the Testimony of *Joseph* to whom it was revealed by an Angel afterwards. But yet, if a man consider the Circumstances of the thing, the Character of the Reporters; the great improbability, that *Joseph*, had he not been fully satisfied of this Truth, should so patiently conceal a thing so much against the Law, and against himself; The Innocent age of the Bless-



August.  
de Trin. lib.  
4 c 5 cont.  
Jud cap 5.  
Chrysoft.

sed Mother, not exceeding fifteen at most, (as St. *Augustine* and other Fathers prove.) All these things make it most unlikely, and morally impossible, that this matter should be invented, and pass upon the World. To all which if the Reader would add that Prophecy of Hers, that *All generations should call her Blessed*, then most improbable, but now exactly fulfilled, there need no more or greater Circumstances, to put this truth out of all reasonable doubt.

Isai. 7. 14.

3. As to the kind and manner of his Nativity, the Scripture is express, that the Messiah must be born of a Virgin; *Behold a Virgin shall conceive, and shall bring forth a Son*, says, *Isaiah* to King *Ahaz*, and gives this as a sign, or marvellous instance, to the house of *David*, of a most miraculous Deliverance, which the Love of God had in reserve for them. But such a sign it could not be, if the latter *Rabbins* evasion were just, who interpret the Text of a *Young Woman* only. And therefore the *Greek* renders it very truly, by a word, which admits of no ambiguity. And so the ancient *Jews* understood it. One of them upon those words of the Psalmist, *Truth shall bud out of the Earth*, observes, it is not said, shall be ingendred, but shall bud; to denote, that the Messiah, who is meant by Truth, shall not be begotten as other men are: And in another place he alledges another *Rabbi* of the same Opinion, and that he proved it from those words of the 110 Psalm, *From the womb of the Morning thou hast the dew of thy Youth*.

R. Sim.  
Bar Jo.  
Isai. 10.  
Gen. 2.  
R. Moser.  
Isai. in  
Plat. 85 &  
in Gen.  
25.

And this miraculous Birth is again as plainly foretold by those words of *Jeremy*, *The Lord hath created a new thing in the Earth; A Woman*

Jer. 31. 22.

*Woman shall compass a man.* The Prophecies of the *Sibyls*, (as *Betuleius* hath delivered them to us) mention the Mother of this Spiritual King, as a most pure and holy Virgin. And *Clem. Alexandrinus* says, that *Simon Magus* pretended himself <sup>Recog.</sup> born of a Virgin, that he might not be thought inferiour to Jesus, in this important point.

4. *Bethlehem* where Jesus was born, had been long foretold and known, for the place designed for Christ's Birth. *Thou Bethlehem E-* Mic. 5. 2  
*phrata, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me, that is to be Ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.* By which words *Micah* describes the singular Priviledge of this, though but a small Town, in comparison of many others belonging to the Tribe of *Judah*: That in It that Governour of *Israel* should be temporally born, whose divine Birth was before the World, from all Eternity. And thus the great Author of the *Chaldee Paraphrase*, who dy'd before Christ was born, and also *R. Selomoh*, and *R. Hacadosch* interpret this Passage, in their Commentaries upon *Micah*. And some have thought this to be contained in that Memorable Passage of *David*. *Psalms*, 132. 3, 4, 5, 6.

5. The Angels appearing to the Shepherds at our Lord's Nativity, is a Circumstance depending upon the Credit and Honesty of the Reporters. And no man can suppose they would ever feign a Story, which had it been false, were most easie to have been confuted by the Testimony of those Shepherds themselves.

6. Of the Name given our Lord at his Circumcision, it is remarkable, that *R. Hacadosch*, proves in his Cabalistical way, that the Mes-

Isai. 9. siah's name at his coming should be Jesus ; For  
 Gen. 49. which among others, he assigns this reason ;  
 Psal. 72. that, as the Name of Him, who first brought  
 96. the *Jews* out of Bondage into the Land of Promise, was *Jesus* or *Joshua*, so must his Name be *Jesus*, who shall the second time deliver them from their present bondage, and restore them to the possession of their antient Country. Which is the chief benefit the later *Jews* expect from the Messias. Nor is it probable, that our Lord's Mother should impose this Name of her own head, since those of *Abraham*, *Isaac*, *Jacob*, and *David*, were commonly in higher esteem, and, had not a particular Revelation interposed, more likely to have been given to this Child, than One which had not belonged to any of the most Eminent Patriarchs.

Mat. 2.

7. The Coming of the Wisemen from the *East* is mentioned by St. *Matthew*, as a matter publicly known. For such the Consult of the Scribes and Pharisees, upon their Enquiry where Christ the new King was born, and the barbarous Murder of so many Innocent Children, must needs have rendred it. And the Evangelist could not have given the Adversaries of our Religion a greater Advantage against him, than to have begun his Gospel with a notorious Untruth, in which infinite persons then alive could have easily disproved him. The Star, by which they were guided, is mentioned by *Pliny*, under the name of a Comet, appearing in the latter end of *Augustus* his Reign, and exceeding different from any, which had ever been seen before. It was judged ( he tells us ) by the whole College of Soothsayers, contrary to the generality of those extraordinary Stars, to portend some universal Good to the World,

World, and for that reason had an Image of Metal erected to it at Rome. *Is Comet a unus*, Cont. Cels. says he, *toto orbe colitur*. Origen mentions one Cheremon a Stoick, much concerned at the consideration of this Star, and taking a journey into Judea, to inform himself fully of the matter, because after the appearance of it, he found the Power of his Gods sensibly decay. And Chal- cidius a Platonick adds, that the Chaldean Astro- nomers did from hence infer some God to have descended from Heaven, for the Benefit of Mankind.

Chalci. a-  
pud Marf.  
Ficin. de  
Stella.

8. St. Luke relates the presenting of Jesus in the Temple after forty days, according to the Law of Moses concerning the Firstborn of Males; and takes notice withal of two Reverend Persons, Simeon, and Anna the Prophetess, coming in at the same time, and acknowledging him for the Saviour of the World. Foretelling several things which should afterwards happen, to Him, his Followers, and his blessed Mother.

Luke. 2.

9. His flight into Egypt for fear of Herod, St. Matthew observes to agree with a Prediction of Hoscadong before; And Isaiah is likewise supposed to have described it, when he said, *Behold the Lord rideth upon a swift Cloud, and shall come into Egypt, and the Idols of Egypt shall be moved at his presence*. Which last Clause Eusebius argues to have been evidently fulfilled, in that eager zeal, by which the Egyptians, formerly of all Nations the most sunk in, and prone to, Idolatry, abandoned their false Gods, and came early into the Faith. It follows in the Prophet, *and I will give the Egyptians over into the hand of a cruel Lord, and a fierce King shall rule over them*. Which was likewise accom- plished

Matt. 2.  
Hof. 11.  
Isai. 19.1.

Dem.  
Evang. L.  
6. C. 20.  
& 9. C. 2,  
3, 4.  
Isai. 19 4

plished about the time of our Lord's coming; for then, after many Ravages and Barbarities exercised upon them by the Roman Generals, Pompey, Caesar, and Anthony; Cleopatra, their Queen, the last of the Ptolomy Line, was forced to flee; and Augustus possess himself of Egypt, and subjected it, as a Province, to the Roman Empire. But then consider how *Isaiah* concludes this matter after threatening so many temporal afflictions: *In that day there shall be an Altar unto the Lord, in the midst of the land of Egypt; they shall cry to the Lord, and he shall send them a Saviour; There shall be a blessing in the midst of the land, whom the Lord of Hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed be Egypt my People.* And so much for my Second Consideration.

V. 19, 20,  
24, 25.

Justin. in  
Tryph.  
Chryf. in  
Joan. Aug.  
de Trin.  
L. 4. C. 5.

III. The Third concerns the Life, and Conversation, the Doctrine and Miracles of our Jesus. Concerning whom, after his return out of Egypt, till his Baptism, which was in the thirtieth year of his Age very little account is to be met with, either in Sacred or Profane Story. That time, being thought to have been employed in the common exercises and labours of a mean private life, that so he might at once demonstrate, both his real Manhood, and his Aversion to Idleness and Sloth.

Antiq. 18.  
7.

St. John Baptist is mentioned by all Hebrew Writers of that time, with great praise and admiration of his eminent Sanctity. *Josephus* calls him a most excellent Person, stirring up the Jews to the study and practice of Virtue. He likewise adds, that *Herod*, partly enraged at the vast concourse of People to him, and partly at the Sollicitation of *Herodias* his Brother's Wife, but his Concubine (for whom he had turn'd off his own Wife, the Daughter of *Are-*

as King of the *Arabians*) first put him in Prison, and soon after to death. To which Murder that Author ascribes the Calamities of that *Herod*, and his whole Family. This person is intended by that *Messenger*, whom the Lord in *Malachi* declares he would *send to prepare his way before him*. And this was done by *John's* Preaching, and Baptism, of Repentance. Who, when Jesus came to him, immediately knew, and published him for the *Messias*, in the presence of all the People, though he had never seen him before. And this acknowledgment was confirmed by a Vision and Voice from Heaven, publicly heard and seen by the multitudes; as three of the Evangelists testify. Which they durst never have presumed to do, had not the matter of fact been evident, and past danger of contradiction. Now what greater Confirmation can we desire of his being the true *Messias*, than that *John* the Baptist, (a Person of confessed Wisdom and Virtue and Holiness, in the opinion of our greatest Adversaries the *Jews*,) should refuse this Honour and Title when offered to himself, and place it upon Jesus: that he should send his Disciples and Followers to Him, and direct them to obey His Doctrine? And this 'tis most evident he did, for not one of *John's* Disciples ever after could be instanced, in, who was not a Christian.

Matth. 3.  
Mark, 1.  
Luke, 3.

When Jesus was baptized, he began to preach: And his whole Doctrine tended to the illustration of his Father's glory, the declaring his Will, and the reformation of Men's Manners. All centred in this common Principle, *The Love of God and our Neighbour*. His Manner and Style was easie and perspicuous, though treating of most profound Mysteries: He had

no pomp of Rhetorick, no art of insinuation, no complying with the Corruptions of Humane Nature, like the old Orators and Philosophers. He did not encumber his Religion with outward Ceremonies, nor pollute it with Carnality, and a Worldly Spirit ; But All was refined ; All purity and simplicity ; All truth and honesty ; All humility, and charity.

He disannulled no one point of *Moses's* Law, which was Moral and Spiritual, but explained, revived, and exalted such to their just perfection. *Moses* commanded external Observances, *Jesus* inward Obedience. The Law said, *Love your Friends* and Brethren; the Gospel, *Love Enemies and Strangers*. *That* commands not to kill ; *This* not to be angry without a cause, and, when there is a cause, not to reproach in that anger. *That* prohibits actual Adultery ; *This* wanton Looks and the very kindling of unlawful desires. *That* suffered no extortion upon a Jew ; *This* says, Defraud and deal hardly by no man. The Law esteem'd Jews only to be Neighbours, the Gospel extends the importance of that word; and the duties of that Relation, to every man alive. The Law appointed Sacrifices for Sin, of the Flock and the Herd ; the Gospel requires no Sheep or Oxen, but, instead of them, the much more precious Sacrifice of a contrite, humble, and believing Heart, depending upon the Blood of him that dyed for all, and recommended by sincere and stedfast resolutions of a better life. In a word, This Doctrine aims at the true and perfect service of God, the Maker and Redeemer of Mankind ; the exalting his name, and power, and goodness, and glory ; and at the beating down the pride of Man's heart, by representing his misery

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misery, and lamentable infirmities; at the contempt of this World and it's Vanities; at the mortifying our Sensual Appetites, correcting and curbing our Passions; at the unfeigned love of others; at raising our Souls to spiritual and Heavenly Thoughts and Objects; at peace of Conscience, purity of Body; and, in one word, at restoring us to a state of Innocence, and Simplicity, and Angelical Sanctity upon Earth, that so we may be meet to be made partakers of the *Inheritance of the Saints in Heaven*. Such was the Doctrine of Jesus, and such as this the Prophets constantly foretold should be the Doctrine of the *Messiah* at his Coming.

3. His Life and Conversation, even by the Testimony of his greatest Adversaries, was yet more admirable than his Doctrine: This being a most lively Picture, wherein all the Graces of that Doctrine were most beautifully express'd. A Person of such steady Gravity, that he was never observ'd to be gay; Of such profound Humility, that, though the Son of GOD, he condescended to the meanest Offices of a Servant; Of such invincible Meekness and Patience, that the most barbarous Injuries and insolent Affronts, never drew from him one angry word: In short, such as *Isaiah* had declar'd should *not strive, nor cry, nor make his voice* Isai. 42. *to be heard in the streets*: Such as *Zechariah* fore- Zech. 9. saw should come to *Sion meek and lowly*. And, as the Prophets had foretold, so the Devils themselves could not forbear confessing, the Virtue and Sanctity of the *Messias* to have been fulfill'd in the Person of JESUS. *Porphry*, after several Oracles uttered by his Idols to this purpose, breaks out into these words; *It is strange to consider what testimony the Gods give to the* De Laude Philoj.



*Antiq. 18. cap. 7.* singular Piety and Virtue of Jesus; of which they declare him rewarded with Immortality; but yet these Christians are deceiv'd in calling him God. And Josephus the Jew says, About this time liv'd one Jesus a wise Man, if it be fit to call him a Man; a worker of most astonishing Miracles, and a Master and Teacher of all who were willing to embrace the Truth.

Here we may observe great stress laid upon the Miracles of Jesus, which come now in the next place to be considered. And, as this History testifies such Miracles to have been done; so are those Miracles as expressly foretold by the Prophets, as Marks of the true *Messias*. Of Him it is declared, That he should make proof of his Commission, by giving sight to the Blind, opening the Ears of the Deaf, loosing the Tongues of the Dumb, and conveying Strength and Agility to the Halt and Maimed. To which Predictions, the Jews in their *Thalmud* agree; and acknowledge that the *Messias* shall be most wonderful in working Miracles. Their publick Commentary upon *Ecclesiastes* says, All the former Miracles of Prophets and holy Men shall be nothing to the Miracles of the *Messiah*, when he cometh.

*Trafl. Be-racoth.*

*Midrash Coheleth, cap. 1.*

*Joh. 7. 31.*

*Avodazara Coheleth*

*Alcor. A. 2047 p. 4. 13, 13.*

And hence was that Question among the Jews, Shall Christ when he cometh do more Miracles, than these which this Man hath done? Now of those Prophecies being accomplish'd in our Jesus, there can be no difficulty. For the Jews themselves, do not only bear record, in their *Thalmud* to his Miracles, but they mention many others, not related by the Evangelists. And Mahomet, in his *Alcoran*, affirms Jesus the Son of Mary, to have been a great Prophet, and to have wrought his Miracles by the Power and Spirit of God only: And, that He himself was sent to confirm the

the Doctrine of *Jesus* in all Points, except that of his Godhead; but here he pretends, *Jesus* went too far, and was check'd by G O D for his Presumption, when he return'd to Heaven.

Thus much then we may gather from the Confession of profest Enemies; and, though this be a great deal, considering what Witnesses it comes from, yet if they should attempt to deny or dissemble the matter, we are able to prove it upon them by undeniable Arguments; especially in two Points, which there is no standing out against.

The *First* is, The calling and retaining his Apostles and Followers; which *Josephus*, in the place last referred to, looks upon as a most stupendous thing. These were Men of different Callings, Conditions, and Engagements in the World: And yet at the first word, they immediately quitted All, Father, Mother, Wife, Children, and all Temporal respects, and followed a Person, who had neither any thing to give, nor made them any Promises of Advantage in this World. One, that never spoke them fair, or delivered any Doctrine, which was not repugnant to Sensual Pleasure, and the Charms of this Life; as abundantly appears by their own Writings, and Testimonies concerning him. One despised and rejected by the greater, and in common repute the better, sort of the People; by the seemingly Wise and Learned of that Country; and, especially by the Governing Party, suspected as a dangerous Enemy to the State. One that had neither Friends in the World to bear him out, nor so much as a House to put his Head in; and yet, notwithstanding all these Discouragements, Men of worldly business, Women of Families and Condition; nay, some of them great Sinners, and very loose-livers before,  
for-

forsook all their Temporal Expectations, and Employments, and followed him with Inconvenience, Danger, and Loss. They continued with him in his Poverty and Afflictions; they were content to lose their Lives for him, and chose this as a less calamity than abandoning Him and his Service. Which is such a Miracle, as never had a Parallel in the whole World, and must needs be allowed to proceed from some Cause very extraordinary, and above Nature.

The *Second Particular* I would mention, consists of such Acts, as far exceed all Human Ability, and these alone openly, in the sight of his mortal Enemies, the *Jews*. These the Evangelists have published to the whole World; and *St. Matthew* did it in the *Hebrew* Tongue, and at a time, when many Persons yet survived, upon whom they were wrought, or who might have been Witnesses to the Truth of the thing. Such was the raising *Lazarus* from the Dead in *Bethany*, a Village but at a little distance from *Jerusalem*, at whose Death and Burial many of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* must needs have been present (according to the *Jewish* Custom of that time, mentioned by *Jesephus*.) They saw him interred, and all the Funeral Rites perform'd, and they saw him raised out of the Grave, by *Jesus* too; four days after. They eat, and drunk, and conversed with him after his return to Life; they might see him every day in the Streets of *Jerusalem*. And is it possible for this to be all a Fiction?

- Mark 5. Such again was the restoring *Fairus's*, the Ruler of the *Synagogue's* Daughter, and the many Circumstances which must needs have made it notorious. Such his raising the Widow's Son at
- Luke 7.

*Antiq. lib.*  
17. cap. 2.

at *Naim*, in the presence of them who bore the Corps to his Burial. Such, healing the Impotent Man at the Pool of *Bethesda*, when the City *Joh. 5.* was crowded with People at the *Passover*. Such, dispossessing him that had the Legion of Devils, *Mark 5.* known to have raged in the Mountains for a long time, so that People durst not pass that way; and sending the Evil Spirit into a Herd of Swine, with such Power, as to drown two thousand of them presently in the Sea; whereupon a whole Country was put into so general a consternation, as to entreat he would depart out of their Coasts. Such, the Feeding and Feasting *Joh. 6.* five thousand Men at once, besides Women and Children, with five Barley-loaves, and two small Fishes. Such, turning Water into Wine, *Joh. 2.* before the Guests of a Marriage-Feast. Such, Healing an incurable Dropsy, at a *Pharisee's* *Luke 14.* Table; and an Issue of Blood in the midst of a mixt Multitude. These and infinite other *Mat. 9.* Miracles were done so publickly, and written so early, and when many would have been most zealous and heartily glad to disprove them; that I cannot but conclude the Fact certain. And since these are above the power of Nature, and could be done by no Power but God's; who will not, cannot, assist, or give testimony to a falshood, it must follow, that what *Jesus* taught was true. And since he declared himself the *Messias*, his Miracles prove that he was so indeed, which is the importance of his own Argument to the unbelieving *Pharisees*: *If ye be-* *John 10.* *lieve not me, believe my Works; and if I do not the 37. 38.* *Works of the Father, believe me not.*

IV. I come now to the *Fourth* and last Branch of this Particular, which relates to the Passion, Resurrection and Ascension of *Jesus*. About the

first of which there is little or no Controversy; since all his Enemies agree him to have been betray'd by his own Disciple, apprehended and delivered up by the *Jews*, condemned and put to death by the *Gentiles*. The Principal of his Countrey, (says *Josephus*) having accused Jesus, and delivered him to Pilate, the then Governour of Judea, under the Roman Emperour, he sentenced him to the Cross. The Enemies of Christianity do not only acknowledge, but boast in this; and one of their greatest Quarrels, and pretences of Scandal taken at us, is, That we should worship as a Divine Person, a Man who died in that ignominious manner. But now; If it can be made appear, that all this was the wise and eternal Appointment of GOD, the surprizing Method which he thought fit to take for redeeming Mankind; that these things were expressly foretold by the Prophets, and those Prophets so understood heretofore by the Learned in the Jewish Law; then, I presume, every reasonable Reader will be satisfied, and content to submit the Foolishness of Man to the Wisdom of GOD.

To begin with the first Step made by Jesus toward his Passion; that triumphant Entry, I mean, which he made into *Jerusalem*, after such measures of Instruction, and such evidence of Miracles had been afforded, as were abundantly sufficient, and the time ordained for his Passion now approached, he came into the City upon an Ass, attended by the multitudes, with a purpose to meet and receive his Death. And this Solemn Approach was foretold by *Zechariah*, some hundreds of Years before, Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Sion, shout, O Daughter of *Jerusalem*, behold thy King cometh unto thee. He is just, and having Salvation, lowly, and riding upon an Ass,

*Ass, and upon a Colt, the Foal of an Ass.* Some few days after this, he was betray'd and sold by one of his own Disciples, as *David* long before had in many passages predicted. Then followed his Apprehension and reproachful Treatment by the Jews, those Buffettings and Spittings, so exactly agreeable to *Isaiah's* Description; *I gave my Back to the smiters, and my Cheeks to them that plucked off the Hair: I hid not my Face from shame and spitting.* After these barbarous Indignities, the Jews delivered him up to the Roman Governor, and never ceased pursuing their implacable Spight, till they saw him actually upon the Cross. Nay, even then too, he was used with all the cruelty and disdain; which *David* in the Person of the *Messias*, had complained of so many Ages before. *They pierced my Hands and my Feet; they parted my Raiment among them, and upon my Vesture did they cast lots. They gave me gall to eat, and when I was thirsty, they gave me vinegar to drink. All they that see me, laugh me to scorn; they shoot out their Lips, and shake their Heads, saying, He trusted in God, that he would deliver him; let him deliver him, if he will have him.*

Psal. 41.  
55. 109.

Isa. 50. 6.

Psal. 22.  
and 69.

This for the Manner of his Death: But as to the End of it, the Scriptures frequently declare, he died for the Sins of Mankind. This was prefigur'd by the Sacrifice of *Isaac*, and the Lift-Gen. 22. ing up of the *Brazen Serpent* in the Wilderness; in short, by all the Bloody Sacrifices of the Mo-Num. 21. saical Dispensation. It was foretold not only in the passages produced already, but most expressly by *Daniel*, *The Messias shall be cut off, but not for himself: And Zechariah* foretels not only his Dan. 9. 26. Death, but the Manner and circumstances of it; Zech. 12. 10. when he says in the Person of *Christ*, *They shall look on me, whom they have pierced.* But if we

would read this whole Matter, set down fix hundred Years before, as clearly as if the Author had been an Eye-witness of it, let us peruse the LIII<sup>d</sup>. of *Isaiah*, who, to intimate the strangeness of the Case, begins his Narration thus: *Who hath believed our report?* And then goes on in terms too well known to need repeating in this place. So particularly was the Death of *Christ*, foretold to the *Jews*; nor do the Ancient Teachers among them pretend to fix any other Sense upon these Passages. The *Talmud*, now more than twelve hundred Years old, declares, That their *Messias* at his coming, shall be put to death. The Author of the *Chaldee Paraphrase*, who died before *Christ* was born, applies that Account of *Isaiah*, to the Murder of the *Messiah* by the *Jews*. R. *Simeon*, in the next Age after, cries out, *Wo be to the Men of Israel, for they shall slay the Messias: GOD shall send his Son in Man's Flesh, to cleanse them, and they shall murder him.* R. *Hadarsan* proves out of *Daniel*, That, when the *Messias* shall have preach'd half seven Years, he shall be slain. The same is confirmed by the *Jews* ordinary Comment upon the *Psalms*; and this agrees exactly with the Account given by us *Christians*, and our Evangelists. The three Hours Darknes at his Death, *Euseb. Chr.* *Eusebius* affirms to be reported by several *Heathen* Authors; and among others, cites one *Phlegon*, a very exact Person, who places it in the fourth Year of the two hundred and second *Olympiad*, which falls in with the eighteenth of *Tiberius*; the very Year wherein our Saviour suffered: Nay, he is so exceeding particular, as to name the same Hours of the Day, which our Evangelists do. *Orig. contr.* *Asculus*, an old *Astronomer*, confirms this matter, and proves withal, That  
accord-

*Lib. de Spe.*

*Hadar. in Dan.*

*Midrash Tehill.*

*Euseb. Chr. A. D. 82. Phleg.*

*Traition. l. 24. Chr. 4. 4. Olym. 202. Orig. contr. Cels. l. 6.*

according to the Position of the *Sun* and *Moon*, Suid. in  
 there could not then happen any Natural E-Jesus.  
 clipse. *Dionysius* the *Areopagite*, made the same Tertull.  
 Observation upon the very Day of our Lord's polog.  
 Passion, being then five and twenty Years old, Dion. Ar.  
 and yet well skilled in *Astronomy*, as appears in Ep.  
 from his own Books. And *Lucian* of *Antioch*, used Lucian. a-  
 frequently to appeal to the *Gentiles's* own Hi-pad Euseb.  
 story, for a sufficient Testimony of these things.

The next thing to be spoke of, is *Jesus's* Resur-  
 rection: A Point of all others most important,  
 and therefore exactly foretold by the Prophets,  
 and promised by *Christ* himself, while conver-  
 sing upon Earth. This was imply'd in all those  
 Predictions of Glory, and Triumph, and Joy,  
 to *Christ's* Church after his Passion: For those  
 could never have receiv'd a just accomplish-  
 ment, had not he risen again from the Dead.  
 Both the Thing, and the Time of it, were pre-  
 figured in *Jonas*: The former was foretold by *Jon.* 2.  
 those words of *David*, *My flesh shall rest in hope*, *Psal.* 16.  
*for thou wilt not suffer thy Holy One to see corruption.* 9, 10.  
 The latter by *Hosea*, *After two days will he revive* *Hos.* 6. 2.  
*us, in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall*  
*live in his sight.* To these Predictions of the  
 Prophets, *Jesus* often adds his own Promise, for  
 the comfort of his Disciples; though at that  
 time his Meaning was not so perfectly under-  
 stood by them. Now if this Promise had ex-  
 tended to some very distant period, (like that of  
*Mahomet's* Reviving after eight hundred Years) Alcoran.  
 though there had been no Intention to perform Arqar. 17.  
 it, yet credulous Men might have been held in  
 long Expectation and Suspense, without any  
 possibility of detecting the Cheat. But when  
*Jesus* confin'd Himself to three Days, it can-  
 not be suppos'd, that he was not in very good



earnest; for otherwise, the Falshood of his Word would soon have discovered it self. And therefore we will observe, what Proof there is that he was really as good as his Word. And here we have the Testimony of Men, whose only Hope, and Confidence, and Happiness, depended entirely upon the Truth of this Matter. His dismay'd and afflicted Disciples, who relate many Appearances made to them by their Master, in his own proper Human Body, after his Return from the Dead. That to *Mary Magdalen*, who with other Devout Women, came with Spices and Ointments to the Sepulcher. That to all those Women together, in their return home. That to *Simon Peter* alone. That to the two Disciples travelling to *Emaus*. That to all the Apostles assembled together privately, and with the Doors shut, for fear of the *Jews*. That to the same Company, eight Days after, when *Thomas* was with them; at which time he eat and drank with them, and suffered his Body to be handled, and proved by them. That to *Peter* and *John*, and other Disciples, fishing at the Sea of *Tiberias*. That to the Eleven Apostles upon Mount *Tabor*. That to five hundred Brethren at once, mentioned by *St. Paul*. That to *St. James*, as the same Apostle testifies. That to all his Apostles, Disciples, and Friends, when he ascended from the Mount of *Olives* into Heaven. To which we may add, That after his Ascension, to *St. Paul* himself.

These are all recorded in Scripture, as Appearances, though not to all indifferently, yet to many, and to such numbers, as were competent and proper Witnesses: and such Appearances as there could be no deceit in; For *He* *sworn* himself, says the Text, by many infallible proofs;

*proofs; such as eating and drinking together, and speaking the things which pertain to the Kingdom of* Acts 1.  
*God, for the space of forty days.* And why should the Truth of these Witnesses be suspected, who had such convictions to satisfy themselves, whose All was concerned in not being imposed upon, and who could have no temptation to impose upon others? What Satisfaction could they take in devising Fables of this kind? What Comfort would his dead Body concealed among them afford? The *Jews* confess the empty Sepulcher, but say his Disciples stole him away: And is this probable? that Men so dejected, so feeble, so apprehensive of danger, that they durst not be known to meet, nay not to be seen out of doors, till inform'd by the Women, who had visited the Sepulcher, that their Lord was risen, should convey away his Body from a strong Guard of Souldiers? Supposing them courageous enough for such an Attempt, could they possibly have succeeded in it? How should they break open the Doors, burst the Seal and Fastenings of the Tomb, and carry their Lord off, with such deliberation, as to leave the *Grave-Cloaths* wrapped up, and laid by in order, never to be seen or heard, and the Body never to be found after? But allowing all this possible, what Profit, what Pleasure or Consolation could they propose to themselves by it? But especially, what account can we give of that sudden and mighty change in these Men's Temper, and Behaviour, upon that occasion? For They who before kept close, and were afraid of every thing, now came forth publicly, and with undaunted Confidence proclaimed this Resurrection, in the Hearing, and to the Face of their bitterest Enemies; affirming that they had seen  
H 4 him,

him, spoken with him, handled him, conversed with him as before; and for confirmation of all this, they were ready to lay down their own Lives. This is such an alteration, that Life and Death are not more distant more distant, than these Apostles, from what they had been but few Days before: Could all this, think you, proceed from a dead Body, got into their possession by stealth? Could the sight of a Body so mangled, and torn, and deformed, as our Lord's upon the Cross, have yielded such astonishing degrees of Comfort? It is never to be imagined.

And therefore *Pilate*, considering the Circumstances, the unlikelihood of the Body being stollen, and the effects this Resurrection had upon *Jesus* his Disciples, examined into the matter, and got the whole truth out of the Guard. The Rising of *Jesus* before their Eyes, the terrible Earth-quake, and the opening of the the Sepulcher, the Terrours they had been in, which made them desert their Post, and the wicked Policy of the *Jewish* Rulers, who had put that ill-contriv'd Story into their Mouths, thereby to stifle, if possible, the Belief of this Resurrection. All these Particulars *Pilate* transmitted by Letter to his Master *Tiberius* (then Emperour) to *Rome*; and withal, the Examinations and Confessions of several, who had spoken with such as rose at the same time, and appeared to their Acquaintance in *Jerusalem*, and gave them assurance of *Jesus* his Resurrection. These Informations made such impression upon *Tiberius*, that he communicated them to the Senate, and moved, That *Jesus* might be admitted into the number of the *Roman* Gods; declaring his own Readiness to give the Imperial Suffrage and Assent

Assent to such a Decree. And upon the Senate's refusal, he did not only express his Displeasure, but gave free Liberty for all that would, to believe in *Jesus*, and prohibited all his Officers upon pain of Death, to molest any such, for their good affection and zeal to that Name. This *Tertullian* asserts of his own knowledge; who, *Tertul.* living in *Rome*, and being a celebrated Pleader, *Apol.* in regard to his Attainments and Quality, had opportunity of inspecting the Records, and did peruse them accordingly. And *Hegeſippus*, another ancient Writer, delivers the same Account, *Hegeſ. l. 1. Enſeb. l. 4. ca. 28.* neither of whom could ever be gain-said by the *Gentiles* in the Point.

But neither was this Opinion of *Jesus* rising from the dead, entertained by *Gentiles* only: for several *Jews* of great Learning and Authority then alive, believ'd it likewise, though they had not the Grace to become *Christians* upon it. This is evident from the Story of *Josephus*, written not above forty Years after our Lord's Passion; who taking occasion to speak of *Jesus*, and his Disciples, after having mention'd his Crucifixion by *Pilate*, at the instance of the *Jews*; and that, notwithstanding all that ignominy and suffering, his Disciples did not cease to love and honour him still; adds, That as a Reward of their constant Affection, he returned to Life the third day, and appeared to them again. Which words are so delivered, as not to speak the Historian's Sense, so much as the common acknowledged Opinion of all sober Persons at that time. For there were then many *Christians* yet living, who had seen and spoken with *Jesus*, after his Resurrection; and infinite *Jews*, who from their Kindred and Friends, that had

had been Eye-witnesses, must needs have heard an Account of it.

Luke 24.  
Acts 1.

I know not whether after such Evidence of our Lord's Resurrection, it be necessary to add any thing more: For they who believe, that *Jesus* when dead, was able to raise himself to Life again, cannot in reason make any difficulty in believing Him able to ascend into Heaven. But of this too St. *Luke* mentions an hundred and twenty Witnesses; who, forty Days after his Resurrection, saw him bodily ascend thither from the top of Mount *Olivet*; and besides this, a Vision of Angels; and to take off all scruple, he names the Place and Day, when and where it happened. He sets down the very words spoken by *Jesus* at his Ascension. He tells the manner of it, and how a Cloud receiv'd him out of their sight. He declares what the Company did, whither they went, and where they remained, after their departure from thence. In short, he is so particular in all the circumstances, that it had been the easiest thing in the world, for the Enemies of our Religion to have disproved and exposed him, if any of those circumstances had not been true. And it concerned him to be punctual, because he had to deal with Men spiteful and vigilant; and the Falshood, if any such had been detected, must have fallen heavy upon him, and those of the same profession with him.

To conclude: This Head then, so far as concerns the Birth, and Life, and Doctrine, and Miracles, and Death, and Resurrection, and Ascension of the Blessed *Jesus*; Since nothing of all these came to pass, which was not foretold by God's Prophets long before; nor any thing was signify'd before, concerning the *Messias*,

*fi*as, which was not most punctually accomplished in and by *Jesus*, during his abode upon Earth: We may most certainly assure our selves that as GOD can neither foretell nor attest any Falshood; so these things, which appear to have been so evidently predicted and fulfilled, are demonstrative Proofs, That our *Jesus* was the true *Messias*. It remains now only to shew this yet more fully, by the Consideration of some Events, whereby he declared his Almighty Power and Truth, after his Ascent into Heaven. And this shall be the Subject of our next Section.

### SECT. III.

*How Jesus proved his Deity after his Return to Heaven.*

THIS Head is capable of being branched out into almost infinite particulars. For, who indeed can recount the many wonderful instances, by which our Lord, exalted to the Throne of his Father, hath evidenced himself to the world? But for order and brevity's sake, I shall confine my self to those only, wherein his Love and Care for his Church, the accomplishment of his Promises, and the Justification of what he taught and foretold, while upon earth, are more immediately concern'd.

Here then I shall consider, (1.) The Protection and Increase of that little Flock Christ left in the World: (2.) The Actions of the Apostles. (3.) The Evangelists and their Writings. (4.) The Martyrs and their Sufferings for the Truth. (5.) The conquest of the Devil and his Kingdom. (6.) The just and exemplary Vengeance executed upon the Enemies  
of

of Christ. And (7.) The fulfilling all those Prophecies delivered by him, while here upon Earth.

1. For the *First* of these, We may remember, how very small the beginnings of this Church were, at our Lord's Ascension. St. *Luke* describes them returning from Mount *Olivet* back to *Jerusalem*, continuing in prayer together, and expectation how God would deal with them; The City and People bent against them, The Name of Jesus odious and despised; No Substance of their own to support them, nor any powerful Friends to assist and countenance them. But while this poor and feeble handful of People were thus divided between fears and hopes, and in likelihood of falling under extremum distress; behold, on the tenth day, Jesus performed his promise of sending the Comforter, the Holy Ghost. By whom, besides the inward joy and incredible satisfaction of mind which they felt in believing they were inspired with courage, to expose themselves, and preach publickly to the World: They received the Gift of Tongues, enabling them to converse with People of all Nations, Wisdom and wonderful illumination in the sublimest Mysteries; Skill to teach the ignorant, and convince their Adversaries; The Gift of Prophecy to see and foretel things to come; The Power of working Miracles in confirmation of the Truth; And, as a taste and pledge of their future success, they saw three thousand converted, by a Sermon of St. *Peter's*, that very day. This increase came on so fast, that in forty years the Heathens themselves confess all parts of the World to have been full of Christians. And not long after *Tertullian* declares, that they had vast multitudes of Profelytes in all Cities

Acts 1.

Acts 11.

Sueton in  
Ner. Tacit.  
Hist. 5.

ties and Countreys, in all conditions and degrees of men. That, would their Religion dispense with the Duties of their Civil Station, there was no need of making War upon their Persecutors; for if they should only stand still and not assist them, the Empire could not support it self without them. So that we see how prodigiously this little Flock grew, in the compass of One Age, notwithstanding all the violent and wicked means used to suppress and extinguish it. Which were so great, that all sorts of Crimes put together were not treated with so much rigour, as that single offence ( for such it was looked upon ) of confessing Christ, and his Religion. And yet there was no concurrence of humane means to promote this Increase, nothing to flatter men's natural Inclinations, no temporal advantage to be gained by coming in. The Terms, upon which Jesus invited men, were such as these. *Repent and be baptised; In the World ye shall have tribulation; They shall scourge and persecute you; The time cometh, that whosoever killeth you shall think that he doth God service. If a man will be my Disciple, let him hate Father and Mother, and Wife and Children, yea and his own life, and take up his Cross, and follow me.* Jesus professes, that the Event of his coming should be, not to bring Peace and ease, but Fire and Sword, and Conflicts, and Enmity between nearest Relations. And yet, with these discouraging Offers, by this Doctrine so cross to our natural Appetites, by Poor and in themselves contemptible Officers, did Jesus in a few years gain more hearts, than ever the most powerful Monarch did by all the temporal Allurements to his service possible to be proposed. All which evidently shews, that the Means of establishing

Matth. 3.

John 16.

Matth. 10.

Luke 14.



blishing this Kingdom were supernatural and that his power could not be less than divine, who contrary to all reason of man, in so short a time, gained so miraculous, so universal a Conquest.

2. The next Consideration, relating to the Apostles, is in some respect more wonderful than the former; That these few, mean, poor, illiterate men should be assigned to so great a work, as the Conversion of all Nations, and make their party good against the Power, and Learning and Malice of the whole World; That they should not only contend with such Enemies successfully, but direct and manage the affairs of their Masters Kingdom with such wonderful Address; That from such insufficiency and slowness of understanding and improvement, as they plainly betrayed by the Questions put to Jesus just before his Ascent into Heaven, the descent of the Holy Ghost, should all on the sudden qualify them for the highest mysteries and most difficult undertakings, which a Conversation of three years and the long repeated instructions of their Master had left them so incapable of; that they should subdue the Great without power, and confute the most exquisite Philosophers without Learning or Study; that they should do Miracles, not only to the wonder, but even the terrour of the beholders; Examples whereof we have infinite in the Book of *Acts*, and such as, had they been forgeries, must needs have been soon detected, and would have effectually discredited them and their Religion for ever. It is therefore observable, that none of their Enemies ever went about to deny the matter of fact; but only had recourse to that old shift of imputing them to the power of Magick. This was the pretence of  
of

of Julian and others; But They, who have studied that Art most carefully, have been most free in declaring the extream vanity of it. And Julian at last, awakened by Calamities, was forced to cry out, *Vicisti Galilae*. Acknowledging the truth of Christ's Miracles and his followers, and the folly of his own fruitless opposition against him and his Religion.

Thus proceeded the Apostles, *Preaching every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following*. This testimony and assistance gave them boldness, so that no terror or threats, no danger or persecution could stop their course. St. Paul's profession was true of them all, that *neither tribulation, nor distress, nor famine, nor nakedness, nor peril, nor sword could separate them from the love and service of their Master, but in all these things they were more than Conquerors*: Nor did this disposition forsake them at the time of their Deaths, which they met in the most terrible shape, with incredible chearfulness; Rejoycing to seal their Doctrine with their Blood: Never so full of confidence, and courage, and consolation, as at that hour; Never so joyfully owning their Lord, and discoursing of Rewards, and Crowns, as at the last instant of their Combat. All which manifestly proves the actions of these men not to have proceeded from a humane Spirit; but to have been inspired and perform'd by the divine force and wonderful assistance of that Lord and God, whom they most truly confessed and preached.

3. Let us, in the *Third* place, observe the Evangelists, who have left us an account of our Lord's Doctrine and Actions. And here it is worth our remark how different a method of

Plin. Hist.  
Nat. l. 30.  
c. 1. Zosim.  
in Juli.  
Niceph. l.  
10. c. 35.

Mark, 16.

Rom. 8.

of

St. Mat-  
thew's.

of delivering his Laws and Precepts our Lord took, from the generality of Law-makers. They procure them authority by publishing their own Laws, and promulging them in their Life-time; so did *Lycurgus* and *Solon*, and *Numa*, and *Mahomet*, and many others. But Jesus passed out of the World silently, without pomp or ostentation; he left nothing written by himself, but exerted his divine power in directing the pen of his Evangelists. Two of these were Apostles, and wrote what themselves had seen: The other two Disciples, who set down what they received from the Apostles. One of the Gospels was written in the *Hebrew* tongue, to perpetuate the actions of Jesus in the Country where they were done; The other Three in the *Greek* Language, then generally used and understood; to spread the knowledge of them throughout the World. The Writers composed them in different Countreys, far distant from each other, and yet all agree in the substance of their Narratives: They wrote at different times, and yet the latter does not reprove or correct any thing in the former. They published these Accounts, while many were yet alive, who knew the facts: and many more, who desired to disprove and stifle them. They are so particular as to set down the very time, and day and hour, the place, the village, the house, the names of the Persons concerned; And the more of these Circumstances, the easier were the Confutation, if they had not been true. They published their Writings in their own Lifetime, and preached the same things that they wrote. These were received, after due examination, and especially upon the approbation

tion of the Apostles : They did not, like other Authors, add or alter in any following Editions ; nor correct any one passage put out at first : And they gave these Writings such Authority, as no Prince could ever yet obtain for the credit of his sanctions ; which was, to lay their lives down in Justification of what they had written.

Their manner of writing is plain and sincere, without art or ornament ; They flatter none, not even Jesus himself : But at the same time they confess him to be God, they publish his infirmities as Man ; His hunger and thirst, his weariness and sleep, his weeping and his fear, his agonies and amazing heaviness of Soul. They dissemble not the defects even of the chiefest Apostles, though such as might seem to discredit and bear hard upon them. They tell the frequent Rebukes of Christ, their dullness of understanding, the very impertinent questions they asked him ; the Incredulity of *Thomas*, the ambition of *James* and *John*, the envy and emulation of them all. And, which is still a farther proof of their Sincerity, they least of all spare themselves, or their more particular friends. St. *Matthew* is only by himself styled *Matthew the Publican* : St. *Mark*, who attended St. *Peter*, and is thought to have written, as He dictated to him, is more full than any of the rest, in describing that Apostle's denial of Jesus, and more reserved than any in the account of his Repentance ; St. *Luke* who was companion to St. *Paul*, hath recorded the difference between him and *Barnabas*, and his consent and concurrence to the murder of St. *Stephen*. So that we may plainly see, they were men of honest Principles, who, as they durst not devise any thing of their own heads ; so they made a Conscience of concealing

cealing any part of the truth, in favour of themselves, or of any other person whatsoever.

These Writings were published and received for undoubted truth, by all that lived in the same Age, and were acquainted with the particulars related in them. Copies of them innumerable were dispersed, and preserved in infinite hands, with all the care and reverence due to the Word of God. They were read in the publick Assemblies of all Countreys, expounded and taught by all Pastors, commented upon by Holy Fathers from time to time. So that we may rest secure, that these Writings have suffered no material Corruption; since so many Copies could not possibly be depraved, without opposition or discovery: And our Bibles at this day give us the same Sentences and Texts of Scripture, as the Fathers who then quoted them in their writings, had them in the first Ages of the Christian Church. So that of this we have no more ground to doubt, than whether *Rome*, or *Jerusalem*, or any other City famous in Story, and well known at this day, be the same place now, which Authors treated of under the same Name heretofore.

For the Credit and Confirmation of these Evangelists and their Writtings, God so ordered the matter, that infinite persons ( who are upon that account called Martyrs ) should testify to the Truth of the Gospel with their Blood. A Testimony, which no other Religion could ever boast of, Except, that some few *Jews* about the *Maccabees* time were injuriously put to death, ( when God for the sins of that Nation gave them up to Tyrants. ) But for the numbers there is no comparison, there being more Christians put to death for their belief in two Months,

Months, than were of the *Jews* in two thousand years before Christ's coming. Which yet must needs seem strange, if we reflect, that the *Jewish* Religion was every whit as opposite to the *Pagan*, as the Doctrines of the Christian are. But thus our Master's words were fulfilled, *I come not to bring Peace, but a Sword. And, Behold I send you forth as Sheep among Wolves*; to be worried and torn in pieces, without provocation, without mercy. Now in these almost incredible sufferings of the Primitive Christians, it is wonderful to observe, what infinite multitudes of each Sex, of all ages, and degrees, and conditions, suffered daily for the Truth's sake! What insupportable and unusual Torments, such as were never heard or thought of before, the Wicked malice and Tyranny of their Enemies invented for the tryal of their constancy and patience. And yet what invincible Courage, and unspeakable alacrity, the Christians expressed in bearing these Afflictions! Such as their very Enemies could not forbear ascribing to some Divine power and supernatural assistance.

'Tis true, we cannot with any good consequence draw any general Conclusion from the Extremity of the Suffering, to the Goodness of the Cause. But, though ill men may endure as well as good, yet they do not behave themselves under it alike. For, as *Tertullian* argues, *Apolog.* "Every evil action is naturally attended with fear or shame. The Malefactors, who love to commit evil, are desirous to conceal that inclination. They tremble when taken; they deny all, when accused; and scarce can be racked into a Confession. They lament their hard fate when condemned, and  
1 2 "curse

“curse their ill Stars for such an unfortunate  
 “end. But what does the Christian do,  
 “Is any of them ashamed? Or does he re-  
 “pent; when apprehended, except for not be-  
 “ing apprehended sooner? If he be charged as  
 “a Christian, he glories in the Charge; if this  
 “be his Accusation, he is not solicitous to shift  
 “it off; if he be asked the question, he readily  
 “owns the thing; if he be condemned, he  
 “thanks God for it. What new sort of Evil is  
 “this, that hath none of the natural conse-  
 “quences of Evil; no fear, no shame, no eva-  
 “sion, or repentance, no sorrow, or murmur-  
 “ing, or complaint? What Evil, (says he) can  
 “this be, where Guilt is matter of Joy, where  
 “Accusation is an Honour, and Punishment is  
 “esteemed the greatest Happiness? This is *Ter-  
 tullian's* reasoning upon the case; and certainly  
 nothing can be a clearer proof of the Omnipot-  
 ence of Jesus, than that impregnable Fortitude,  
 which above all the force of humane Nature and  
 Reason, he inspired into such numbers of Mar-  
 tyrs for the Truth.

5. I come now to observe the demonstrations  
 of Jesus his divine Power, upon the Kingdom  
 of Darkness and wicked Spirits: Which suffi-  
 ciently appears, from the answers of Oracles  
 after Christ's Birth, conveyed to Posterity by  
 Heathen writers themselves. *Eusebius*, hath  
 produced many in his sixth Book, *de prepara-  
 tione Evangelica*, especially from *Porphyry*, who  
 introduces *Apollo* crying out, that the ho-  
 nour and wisdom of his Oracles had now quite for-  
 saken him. So fully were those Prophecies made  
 good in Jesus, of bringing all the Idols to  
 Confusion. The wicked Spirits owned this  
 power of his, while he was yet upon Earth;  
 Con-

Confessing him to be the Son and Holy one of God; and begging, that when he dipossess'd Mark. 5. the *Demoniack's*, they might not be torment-  
ed, nor sent back into Hell, but suffered to wander in Mountains and go into herds of Swine. And these acknowledgments they made publicly, and, by what happened afterwards, shewed, that they were disposed of at his pleasure. This appeared yet farther after Jesus his death; For, upon the publication of his Gospel throughout the World, the Oracles, which before were frequent in most Countreys, were universally put to Silence. Of this we need no Evidence but the Confessions of the Heathen themselves, *Lucan*, *Juvenal*, *Strabo*, Juven. Sat. 6. Strab. 1. 9. and *Plutarch*, own the fact. And the last labours hard to assign reasons for it. But the two chief fixed upon by him are manifestly insufficient. For when he ascribes it to the increase of Wisdom in the World, which rendered such Answers of the Gods not any longer necessary; he contradicts himself, and those Examples of the Antients, which he declared in his *Lives* not parallell'd by any in After-ages: And when he imputes it to those Spirits waxing feeble or dying with length of time; he forgets, that immaterial Substances cannot grow infirm, or old, neither can they dye. So that we are still to seek for some other Cause, and shall find none so satisfactory as that assigned by *St. John*, 1 John. 3. 8. For this cause the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the Devil. And, among those works, none were of more pernicious consequence than the Idolatrous Superstitions, and vain delusions of Oracles, the seeking to them as Gods, and depending upon them for future Contingences.



Matth. 10.  
 Luke, 10.  
 Apolog.

This power over the infernal Kingdom and it's Ministers was not confined to the single Person of Jesus himself, but by Him communicated to his Servants and Followers: Thus it was to the Twelve, and to the Seventy in his Life-time; and, after his Death, the Commission was greatly enlarged. Insomuch that *Tertullian* makes a bold Challenge to the Heathen Magistrates and Persecutors of his time, and offers to put his own and Fellow-Christians lives upon that Issue, "That he or they could controvert those Spirits, whom the *Romans* worshipped as Gods; that he would force them and their Priests, before any Heathen Tribunal, to confess themselves Devils, and acknowledge Christ to be the Wisdom and Power of God; that he is in Heaven, and shall return to judge the World; that they are in Dread of that horrible judgment for their wickedness, that they fear God in Christ, and Christ in God, and are, fore-against their wills, made subject to his Servants. This proffer made to the Persecutors then in *Rome*, we may be very confident would have been accepted, had not the Enemy of Truth been sensible, that the Experiment was dangerous, and would turn to his greater confusion. Nor did the Word and Command only, but even the bare presence of Christians, put a terrour into those Spirits of darkness. *Lactantius* says, that upon a poor Christian Servant attending his Master to a Heathen Temple, the Idols cry'd out, that nothing could be done, so long as that Christian was by. *Eusebius* relates a like answer, from *Apollo* to *Dioclesian*. And *Porphyrus* says, of the Plague of *Messina*, that *Æsculapius* and all the other Gods were departed

Instit. L. 4.  
 c 19. Præp.  
 Evang. 15.  
 Porphy. L. 1.  
 cont.  
 Christ. Eu  
 feb. ubi su:  
 173.

departed from that City, upon the coming in of the Christians. For since men began to worship Jesus, there was no good to be had from their Gods. And though this was intended as a malicious insinuation, to render the Christians odious, and expose them to the fury of their Enemies; yet the Confession is very remarkable; and gives us the true cause of the utter overthrow of Oracles throughout the whole Earth.

6. My next proof of this divine power and justice concerns the severe and memorable vengeance executed upon the Enemies of Jesus and his Religion. And here I might instance in the dreadful Calamities and wretched deaths of *Herod the Great*; of his Son *Archelaus*; of *Herod Antipas*, the murderer of *St. John Baptist*, and derider of our Lord at his Passion; of that other *Herod* who slew *St. James* and imprisoned *St. Peter*; of *Pontius Pilate*, who condemned Jesus to be crucify'd; of *Caligula*, and *Nero*, and the many other *Roman Emperors*, who were as visibly distinguished by their miserable afflictions, as they had distinguished themselves by their implacable hatred and persecution of the Christians. I might also observe, that few or no such examples occur in History, since the Empire became Christian under *Constantine*, except *Julian the Apostate*, *Valens the Arian*, and some others notorious and detestable for their wickedness. But I content my self with one eminent instance of Justice upon a whole Nation, the most observable of any that ever happened in the World: That I mean upon *Jerusalem*, and the Jewish people, for their obstinacy and barbarity to Jesus, at his Death and Passion.

*Josephus*, and *Philo*, and other Historians, who were either contemporary with, or lived

Matth. 2.  
14. Luke,  
23. Acts 12.

Joseph:  
Antiq. L.  
19. C. 2.

De Bell. immediately after our Lord, declare the Calamities inflicted upon that People, to be past all power of Expression. What they suffered by Pilate under *Tiberius*; by *Petronius* under *Caligula*; by *Cumanus* under *Claudius*; by *Festus* and *Albinus* under *Nero*; and, when these Cruelties had moved them to rebel against their *Romans*, by their utter ruin and extirpation under *Vespasian* and *Titus*. *Josephus* an Eye-witness of their miseries, tells us of eleven hundred thousand slain; fourscore and seventeen thousand taken alive, and either put to death afterwards in publick triumphs, or set openly to sale for slaves, to be scattered all over the World. In this universal Calamity it is observable, that, at the same time and place, in which they had put Jesus to death, that is, in *Jerusalem*, and at their Feast of the Passover, when their whole Nation was assembled from all parts of the Countrey, they received this subversion from that very *Roman Power*, to which by common Cry they had appealed from Jesus before. As they had apprehended Jesus, who entred to his Passion from the Mount of *Olives*, so *Tim* upon the same Mount first opened his Siege against the City: As they dragged Jesus from *Caiaphas* to *Pilate*, so were they now haled from *John* to *Simon*, the heads of two contending Factions, and scourged and tormented before their Tribunals: As they had caused Jesus to be derided, and buffeted and villanously abused by the Souldiers; so were their Nobles and Principal Rulers scornfully used, scourged, and crucified, by *Roman Souldiers*: Which last indignity of Crucifixion was never practised upon the *Jews* of Condition, before the death of Jesus. But in this War, *Josephus* acquaints us, that five hundred

De Bell.  
L. 5. & 28.

hundred of his Nation were put to this opprobrious punishment at once: So that there was neither room left for Crosses, nor Bodies left to fill them. This dreadful misery fell upon the *Jews*, about forty years after our Lord's Ascension, when they had given unpardonable proofs of an obdurate and perverse Spirit; when they had slain *St. Stephen* and *St. James*, and banished *St. Peter* and *St. Paul*, and Others, who in vain laboured to convert them. And yet so Providence ordered it, that the Christians who lived at *Jerusalem* had retired, a little before the siege, to *Pella*, and so escaped the common destruction, which overtook that City and it's Inhabitants. The account of the Jewish War in *Josephus* shews how their affairs declined, and grew every day more deplorable. When the War was at an end, *Titus* sent a Present of sixteen thousand *Jews* to his Father, to be put to death at *Rome*, by sundry kinds of Torments. Others he diverted his *Romans* with; and *Josephus* saw two thousand five hundred in one day murdered in combat with one another, and devoured by Wild Beasts at the Emperour's appointment: Others in *Antioch* and other great Cities were made Fuel for their fires of Triumph; Others were sold to slavery, others condemned to the Mines and Quarries for their Lives. After this, under *Trajan*, *Marcus Turbo* in *Africa*, and *Lucius Quintus* in the East, slew so many *Jews*, that all Histories agree, the multitude of the slain cannot be exprest. After this under *Adrian*, *Julius Severus* was sent to extinguish the remains of that wretched People, who destroyed nine hundred and eighty Towns and Villages, and slew five hundred and fourscore thousand of that race in one day: He beat down  
the

the City of *Jerusalem*, so that of all their anti-ent Buildings, there was not one Stone left upon another: He rebuilt part of it again, and caused it to be inhabited by Gentiles only: He changed the name to *Ælia*, in honour of the Emperour; drove all that progeny out, with a severe injunction never to return, or so much as look back to their Countrey again. And thus was that dreadful Imprecation accomplished to the uttermost, which the *Jews* had so solemnly bound upon themselves and their posterity, when Jesus stood before *Pilate's* Judgment-seat; crying out with one voice, *His Blood be on Us and on our Children.*

Matth. 27.  
25.

7. This notorious and exemplary Punishment, or rather Casting off, of the Jewish People, which before was God's Peculiar, is an eminent proof of my last Consideration: The fulfilling our Lords words and Prophecies. It being foretold in most express and awakening terms, That all the innocent blood of God's Servants, shed

Matth. 23. in former Ages, should be required at the hands of that generation; that their house should be left desolate; That of their sumptuous Buildings, there should not one Stone be left upon another; That the

Matth. 24.  
Luke 19.

days were coming, when their Enemies should come upon *Jerusalem*, and cast a trench about her, and compass it round, and keep it in on every side, and cast it down to the ground: The Signs and particular season whereof he gives his Disciples warning of, When you shall see *Jerusalem* compassed with Armies, then know, that the desolation thereof is nigh. For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. They shall fall by the edge of the Sword, and shall be led away captive into all Nations: For there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this People:

Luke 21.  
20.

For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. They shall fall by the edge of the Sword, and shall be led away captive into all Nations: For there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this People:

ple: *And Jerusalem shall be troden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.* Now these Predictions were delivered at a time, when the *Jews* seem'd most secure, and in perfect amity with the *Romans*. As they likewise continued, when the Evangelists committed them to writing: They never had less cause to suspect so dreadful a Change; And yet the certain foresight our Lord had of it, was not only justified abundantly by the Event, but signified by those Tears of Pity, which he shed over that City, and the warning given to her Daughters from the Cross, not to weep for Him but for their Children, in regard of the miseries, which should soon after befall them. And it is observable, that about a hundred years after *Phlegon* a celebrated Chronologer, and servant to *Adrian* the Emperor, observing the very punctual accomplishment of these Prophecies, declared, that never any man foretold future Events, with so great certainty and Exactness, as Jesus had done. Which observation, though restrained by that Author, to the single case of the *Jews*, (a sufficient demonstration, though we could produce no other of our Lord's prescience and divine Spirit,) yet is confirmed to Us Christians, by many other instances, which it is not possible for humane Learning, or prudent conjecture, or any thing less than God, to have had any insight into. Such are the foretelling his own Death, with the Time, Manner, and all the Circumstances of it; the fears and flight of his Disciples, though they so solemnly resolved and protested the contrary; the three denials of *St. Peter*; the Treachery and Impenitence of *Judas*; the Time of his Resurrection; the sending of the Holy Ghost; And many other predictions

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Luke, 23.  
28.

Phleg.

Tral. L.

Annal.

See Orig.  
cont. Cels.

L. 2.

not yet fulfilled, even then, when the Disciples published them to the World: And which, if not precisely agreeable in their Events, had been the greatest and most irreparable damage, possible for the Credit of those Writers, and the common Cause of Christianity, ever to have sustained.

But I may expect, That Infidels will object against the Authority of these Evangelists, and pretend these Matters forg'd, or post-dated to their Events: And therefore I shall desire such to consider some others, predicted expressly, not only when they had not, but when there was not the least humane appearance that ever they should have taken effect. And what can these Men alledge in Bar, to that Prophecy of the kind and manner of *St. Peter's* Death? or that of *St. John*, dying in a manner different from the rest of the Apostles, and surviving that coming of our Lord, to destroy the *Jewish* Nation? or that of the cruel Persecutions, which his Disciples should afterwards undergo for his Religion; and that too from the *Romans*, who then quietly permitted the Exercise of any kind of Religion? or lastly, that of the Constancy of his Followers, and the amazing increase and Success of the Gospel, notwithstanding the unspeakable hardships and afflictions, by which Men laboured to discourage and suppress it? These are Facts not to be deny'd, and so universal a Conquest gain'd by a suffering persuasion, which had so little to recommend it to a corrupt World, and so many difficulties to vanquish, was questionless, a Point so out of the Compass of humane Reason and Probability, that we cannot ascribe the Foresight and fulfilling of it, to any other cause, than the Wisdom and Power of God himself.

SECT.

## SECT. IV.

*The Conclusion.*

**A**Nd now, from what hath been said in this Chapter, I ought not to doubt, but my Reader is satisfy'd in these three Points.

I. That from the beginning of the World there was a *Messiah* or Saviour promised; and that in some later Ages, though long before his actual Appearance, the Time, the Manner, the End and the Circumstances of his Coming, the Quality of his Person, Doctrine, Life, Death, Resurrection, and Ascent into Heaven, were signify'd and predicted by the Prophets so plainly, that the fulfilling of these Prophecies might be a sufficient mark to distinguish the true *Messias* by.

II. Secondly, That these Particulars so declar'd and foretold, were all most exactly fulfilled in the Person, and Actions, of our *Jesus*, while upon Earth.

III. Thirdly, That, besides that Evidence during his Conversation here, he hath likewise left us many irrefragable Testimonies of his Divine Power, since his departure into Heaven. So that every Christian may firmly, and undoubtedly persuade himself of the truth of that Religion, which *Jesus* taught and established in the World. There being such absurdities, and insuperable difficulties, consequent upon denying this, that a fair and reasonable Man would admire, there should be such a thing as an Unbeliever left in the World. As for the purpose :

1. Is it even possible, That so many things should be foretold, so particularly, so precisely, in so many Ages, and in different places, by different

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rent Persons, but all in great veneration for Piety and Virtue ; with so nice an Agreement in all ; and yet some, to humane Reason, very unlikely Circumstances ; and this to be done by any, but the Spirit of that GOD, whose incommunicable Prerogative it is only to see and know distinctly, future Contingences, long before they are brought to pass, or so much as thought of, by those who are the instruments of bringing them about ?

2. Can any Man alive persuade himself, that so many things so unaccountable and amazing, should be in every point exactly fulfilled, in any other Person except him only, of whom they were intended ?

3. Will the Notions any Man hath of GOD, suffer him to suspect, that GOD would have concurred with *Jesus*, and assisted him in things above the power of Nature, and given him the Testimony of a Teacher sent from himself (as Miracles confessedly are) if he had been a Deceiver, and taken upon him to publish a false Doctrine ?

4. Admitting that *Jesus* had intended to seduce Mankind, would he have taken so awkward a Method, as that of imposing Precepts hard and repugnant to the general strain of Flesh and Blood ? Would he not rather, like *Mahomet*, have drawn them in by Principles of Sensuality, and suited himself to the Taste and Inclinations of Men ? Certainly, as he could not have proposed, so the World could never have embraced so pure and so austere a *System* of Religion, without the assistance of a Supernatural and Divine Power.

5. Could a Man by any Power less than this, a Man meanly born and educated, a Man sent in-

to the World, when Learning was in it's most flourishing state: Could such a one, I say, at such a time, have been by any but a Divine Power, so exquisitely knowing, as to excel all the Wisdom of *Philosophers*; to give more plain distinct Rules for living, than all the Sages that ever lived; to infuse these so powerfully into the Minds of poor simple Men, that the most unlearned *Christian* should be able to say more of the Knowledge of GOD, of the Creation of the World, of the End of Man, of the Measures of Moral Good and Evil, of the Immortality of the Soul, of the Judgment to come, of the Rewards and Punishments of Virtue and Vice, than all the Sects and Schools, who for so many Ages had laboured in these Points, and valued themselves upon attaining to higher Degrees of Learning in them, than common Men?

6. Had not *Jesus* been sincere, why should he keep to so severe, so private a way of living? Why should he so industriously decline Advancement and Applause? Why did he offer himself to so opprobrious a Death? Why did he make choice of such poor and despicable Persons for his Apostles and Disciples? And whence is it that Men engag'd in the affairs of the World, follow'd him in such multitudes, that they stuck to him with such Zeal, and Constancy, and Perseverance; even to Death? Cheats are never of long continuance, nor do Men rashly quit all temporal Advantages, for the Service of One, who pretends not to make them any amends of this kind? And what Evidence can we have of any Man's Sincerity, if these Considerations will not put it past a doubt?

7. What account can an Infidel give of the astonishing progress of the *Christian Faith*? set  
on

on foot by plain unskilful People, not cut out for Dissimulation, or Artifice, or Invention: They went against the stream of all Mankind: They persevered in Tortures and Afflictions inexpressible: They wrought Miracles above the reach of any humane Power: They overthrew Idolatry, and confounded all the Powers of Hell, by the single Name of their Master: They saw the Prophecies of *Jesus* fulfilled, the Punishment of their Enemies, the Conversion of whole Provinces, and Kingdoms; and in time the *Roman* Empire it self became subject to the Law of a Crucified Saviour. This is so marvellous; that we cannot sure but acknowledge it to be the Lord'y Doing.

Hof. 3. 4. 8. Lastly, Who can read so many express Prophecies of the Old Testament, declaring, that the *Jews* should abandon, persecute, and barbarously murder the true *Messiah*, at his coming: that for this Crime they should themselves be abandoned by God, finally ruined, dispersed all over the World, *Without a King, without a Prince, without a Sacrifice, without Altar, or Ephod?* And compare with these Denunciations of Vengeance, that which came upon that Nation, soon after the Death of *Jesus*, the Slavery, and Banishment, and Reproach they have continued in ever since; their forlorn Condition, with regard both to their Temporal and Spiritual Affairs; and, in short, that inexpressible variety of Miseries they are sunk into, without any prospect of Recovery: Who, I say, can observe this, and not be convinced, That that *Jesus*, whom with wicked Hands they crucified and slew, is the very *Messias*; and that it is his Blood, which lyes so heavy upon Them and Their Posterity?

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Since then we have such manifold, such abundant Evidence, that Our *Jesus* is the only Saviour of Mankind, and consequently, that His Religion is the true way of serving God acceptably, and to attain everlasting Happiness; I will entreat my Reader to consider farther, That the same *Jesus* foretold as a *Saviour*, was likewise by the same Prophets, foretold as a *Judge*. And that both Testaments are very frequent and pressing, in describing the Majesty, the Severity, the Terroure of that Second Coming: The Niceness of the Account to be rendered of each Action, Word, and Thought: The Everlasting Concern, depending upon the Sentence of that Great Day; and the mighty Importance, Usefulness, Necessity of bearing this continually in mind, that it may influence our Lives, and prevail with us to make due Preparation to meet Our Lord at his Coming. For this very Person Himself hath forwarn'd us, That his more excellent Law, if not obey'd and diligently perform'd by us, shall add to the number of our Stripes, and serve only to aggravate our Condemnation. If therefore my Reader receiv'd any Light and Satisfaction, in the Truth of the Christian Religion, by the foregoing Pages; I must exhort and conjure him, That, to the confirmation of his Judgment, he would add, the Amendment of his Life; that he will labour to attain the Benefits of the Gospel, by becoming a Christian indeed, and not resting in the mere Name, and empty Profession only. To which purpose I shall, in the next Chapter, shew wherein the Duty of such a one consists; that so every one of us may be able to judge of his own Condition, and provide in time against the Doom reserv'd for those wretched People, who shall

in vain cry, *Lord, Lord*; and be rejected with, *I know you not*; *Depart from me all ye that work iniquity.*

## CHAP. V.

### Of Faith, and Good Works.

**H**AVING formerly prov'd, That the End for which Man was created, and plac'd in this World, is the Serving of God, and thereby gaining eternal Happiness; I now proceed to shew, wherein that Service consists. Which, to be short, is in believing the Doctrines, which *Jesus* and his Disciples have taught; and in obeying those Rules and Precepts, which They have left us, for the Government of Our Lives. For in these two Points, the Sum of Christianity is contain'd.

And *First*, for our Belief: It is not to be imagin'd, that the Wisdom and Goodness of God, should leave us destitute of sufficient Instruction and clear Evidence, for all those Articles, which he hath made necessary to Salvation. The Privilege of *Christians* in this respect, is foretold by the Prophet *Isaiah*; *An High-way shall be there, and it shall be called, The way of Holiness*; the wayfaring-men, though fools, shall not err therein: Meaning, that the Doctrine of the *Messias* should be so plain and intelligible, that Men of weak Capacities (provided they apply'd themselves to the Study of it with an honest Mind) should be able to discern their Duty. And hence *St. Paul* calls Hereticks *Self-condemned*; because the swervings of Men from the Truth, proceed rather

Chap. 35.

Tit. 3.

ther from Sin, or Neglect, wilful Errour, or Inconsideration, Passion or Prejudice, than from any real Difficulty in those Points, wherein the Substance and Foundation of our Religion consists. The Apostles of our Lord taught one Doctrine unanimously, throughout the several Churches where they preach'd: The main Articles of this Doctrine were form'd into short Summaries, call'd *Creeds*: Those *Creeds* every Person at his *Baptism*, was requir'd to declare his Assent to: They were collected out of Scripture, and impos'd nothing, which was not either expressly contain'd there, or might not by manifest Consequence, be prov'd from thence. Those Scriptures were written, dispersed, and approved as in a full declaration of the Will of God concerning us. The Body of *Christians*, united by, and consenting in, these Doctrines, over the face of the whole Earth, were called the *Catholick-Church*. When any wicked or perverse Men advanced strange Opinions, Appeal was constantly made to these Writings, as the Common-Standard of Faith: All false Glosses and forced Interpretations of these were reject-ed, and forbidden to be received: and Men were esteemed Orthodox, or otherwise, as they agreed or disagreed with this Rule. So that He, and He only, is to be reputed a true Believer, who sticks close to the Ancient, the Universal Church of *Christ*; and, in that, to the clear and natural Sense of the Word of God, even in those things, which his own Reason cannot distinctly comprehend. And they, who hold to this Rule, and submit to this Authority of God and his Church, are in a safe Condition, as to the first Point, which concerns the Faith of a *Christian*.

## S E C T. II.

*Of Good Works.*

**T**HE Second branch of our Duty regards the Life and Manners of a Christian; The discharge whereof is more difficult than the former, in proportion as the dangers and temptations to it are more various. For the Generality of Errors and Heresies have ever been observed to take their rise, either from a proud, or a factious Spirit. Pride disposes men to broach new Opinions, to affect Singularity, to wrest and pervert, or even to question the Authority of Scripture; to condemn the judgment of others, and think our selves wiser than all Mankind; to set up our own Notions and Reason for the measure of what we believe, to reject mysterious truths, and throw off every thing, which does not suite with our own Interests, or Prejudices, or weak Apprehensions; to prefer the Arguings of our own mind before the Revelations of the wise and great God, and to force his Word to descend to our Capacities. Faction shakes off all Authority of Superiours, as an insupportable Yoke; kindles Contention, arms People against their Lawful Guides, and breaks men into Parties, cuts in sunder the Bonds of unity and peace, rebels against God's Ordinances, and turns the beauty of his Church into deformity and confusion.

But, though these two be the principal causes of errors in Faith and Opinion, yet are not the occasions of vicious practice to be brought within so narrow a compass. These are as various as we have corrupt passions, and inordinate desires; Each of which may, and often does, betray us to irregularities in our Lives. And hence the

the Scripture levels it self much more against Vice, and abounds more with exhortations to a holy Life, than in directions for sound Belief: Because our frailty in this respect is greater, and the temptations we have to encounter, more numerous. Hence our Saviour began his Preaching with the Doctrine of Repentance; and in that divine Sermon on the Mount, treats of Moral Virtues: Humility, and Meekness, and Justice, and Purity, Patient suffering, Forgiveness of Injuries, Fasting, Prayer, Contempt of Riches, Contentedness and Resignation, Charity, Integrity, entring in at the strait gate, and an exact Diligence in fulfilling all God's Commands, and Living up to what we have learned. He answers his Disciples with great solemnity, that he came not to destroy, but to perfect, the Law; that They who break any of his Commandments, and by their Doctrine or Example encourage others in doing so, shall have no place in his Kingdom; He exhorts his Disciples to shine as Lights in the World, by an exemplary conversation; and tells them, *except their righteousness exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees, they shall in no wise enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.* He tells them plainly that they cannot serve two Masters, and therefore, either God or Mammon must be abandoned; And concludes, that the only proof of a good Tree is yielding good fruit; which every Tree, that does not, though otherwise never so beautiful to the Eye, shall certainly be hewn down, and cast into the fire; and that, not every one who shall say unto him, Lord, Lord, shall be saved at the last day, but even such as had wrought Miracles in his Name, if they heard his sayings and did them not, shall reap no benefit by their Belief, or by any other Priviledges,



viledges, but shall be denyed and rejected by him in their utmost extremity.

Jam. 2.  
26.

This long Lecture of a virtuous life is a plain Argument, that the owning of Jesus and his Doctrine will stand them in no stead, who are not careful to conform their lives to what he taught. For, though Faith be the foundation, yet there goes a great deal more to the finishing this Spiritual building. The Principles of Christianity are soon learnt, but the practice of it is an Employment for our whole Lives. And, without This, we are but like a foundation without a superstructure, or a stock without branch or fruit, for so St. James hath told us expressly, that all the Life of Religion lyes in the practice. *As the body without the Spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.*

August. de  
fide & o-  
per. c. 14.

This is a point in which men, partial to their Lusts, and willing to indulge them with some pretence of Reasons, began very early to mistake; And therefore they contrived to find some colour for their Liberties, from several passages of St. Paul, where he seems to set the obedience of Faith, in opposition to a Law of works. Some of the Fathers have been of opinion, that not only St. James, but some other of the Apostles, who wrote after St. Paul, had the clearing this difficulty particularly in view. I will here present the Reader with a passage out of St. Augustine at large to this purpose, because it makes very fully for the matter now in hand. "A wicked Opinion having sprung up, even in the Apostles days, by misunderstanding St. Paul's argument, St. Peter, St. John, St. James, and St. Jude aimed in their Epistles principally at this end, to vindicate the Doctrine of St. Paul from the false

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“consequences charged upon it, and to shew,  
 “that *Faith without good works is nothing worth.* Gal. 5.  
 “And indeed, St. Paul does not speak of Faith  
 “at large, but only of that lively, fruitful, and  
 “Evangelical Faith, which (as himself says,)  
 “worketh by Love. As for that Faith, void of  
 “works, which these men think sufficient to sal-  
 “vation, he declares positively against it, that  
 “though he had such in the highest degree, e-  
 “ven to work miracles, and remove mountains 1 Cor. 13.  
 “yet if he had not Charity it would profit him no-  
 “thing. And what he means by Charity is plain,  
 “when he calls it in other places, *a new Creature,* Ephes. 6.  
 “and the *fulfilling of the Law.* Hence St. Peter in Rom. 13  
 “in his second Epistle, after exhorting men to 2 Pet. 1. 3.  
 “add to their faith virtue, &c. takes notice, how  
 “some passages of his Brother Paul had been  
 “wrested by unlearned and unstable men to their own  
 “destruction. And he calls it *wresting*, because  
 “St. Paul was in truth of the same opinion, with  
 “the other Apostles, and held Life eternal im-  
 “possible to be obtained by any Faith, which  
 “had not the attestation of a virtuous Life.  
 “Nay, St. James compares this to the Devils  
 “themselves; *Dost thou believe there is one God?*  
 “*thou dost well, the devils also believe and tremble.*  
 “What could be said more truly, more smart-  
 “ly than this? For thus indeed it was. The De-  
 “vils confest Christ to be the Son of God, and  
 “thus far agreed with St. Peter; yet Christ com-  
 “mended the one, and rebuked the other. Let  
 “not then ignorant Minds be deceived with a  
 “vain opinion of knowing God, if they confess  
 “him only with a dead Faith. They read per-  
 “haps, *This is life Eternal to know thee, the true* Joh. 17. 3.  
 “*God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent:* but  
 “then they must remember, how the same E-

1 Joh. 2. "vangelist explains that knowledge, when he  
 3, 4. "says, *By this we know that we know God, if we*  
 "keep his commandments. *He that saith I know*  
 "God, and keepeth not his commandments, the same  
 "is a Liar, and the Truth is not in him. With  
 such as these it is, that our Lord expostulates,  
*Why call you me Lord, Lord, but do not the things*  
*which I say?* And again, *If ye know these things*  
*happy are ye if ye do them.* Of such he complains  
 among the Jews, *This People honoureth me with*  
*their lips, but their heart is far from me.*

I will conclude this Argument with St. Chrysostome's reflection, upon the person cast into utter darkness for want of the Wedding Garment; whom he looks upon as an Emblem of all wicked Professours of Christianity. Admitted into the Feast by virtue of his Faith and Knowledge, as they are baptised and visible Members of Christ's Church, but shut out because not adorned with good works, as they shall one day be, who cast a blemish upon a Holy Faith, by a scandalous and ungodly Life. "He was invited to the Feast, and brought to the Table, (says he) but because the foulness of his Garment dishonoured the Master of the Feast, observe, how lamentably his expectations were disappointed; how grievous a punishment he was doomed to. He was not only thrust from the Table, and not suffered to eat of the Marriage Supper, but was also bound hand and foot, and cast into utter darkness, a place of weeping and gnashing of Teeth. Let us not then, I beseech you, let us not deceive ourselves; by imagining, that Faith will save us without Works. For except we joyn purity of heart and life, with our belief; and, in this holy Vocation of ours, deck and adorn our  
 "selves

“ selves with the beautiful Garments of virtuous deeds, which may secure us an admittance at the Marriage-feast in Heaven ; nothing shall be able to deliver us from partaking in the misery and condemnation of this wretched man. This is well observed by St. Paul, who after having said, *We have an house not made with hands for ever in the heavens*, does not forget presently to add this limitation, *If so be that being clothed, we be not found naked*. Thus far he.

It were easie to produce many other Authorities to this effect ; but These, and the plain words of Scripture, and the Reason of every sober man, are sufficient to shew the necessity of a holy Life, in order to our future happiness. And no man now can be at a loss to know wherein the true service of a Christian consists. So that each Reader, by the help of this little already said, is abundantly qualified to take a view of himself, and to make a right judgment of the Condition of his own Soul : How he may expect to come off in the last great day of account ; what profit he may hope to reap, or what damage he may fear to sustain, by his knowledge and profession of Christ and his Gospel. To him that walketh uprightly his Conscience may speak peace ; and God, who cannot lye, hath promised quietness, and assurance of Peace for ever : Rewards inestimable, and infinite : To him that departs from the right way of true Faith and a good Life, pains and punishments no less unconceivable are reserved. So that every Christian, who is in earnest desirous to secure his own Salvation, must be sure to keep his Eye constantly fixed upon Both these ; To Believe what God hath revealed, and to Live according to the Principles he professes to believe.

Which

Which latter, being, as I hinted before, the more difficult part of the Christian's business, I shall apply my self the more diligently in the following parts of this work, to explain and illustrate those Virtues required of us, to remove those Obstructions and Difficulties, which might otherwise prove of ill consequence to us, and by all possible means to awaken and excite men's sluggish hearts to the considerations and vigorous prosecution of this most important affair; upon which the endless Woe or Welfare of every one of my Readers does entirely depend.

## CHAP. VI.

### Of Eschewing Evil, and Doing Good.

**W**HEN the Prophet *Isaiah* instructs his people, how they should return, and render themselves acceptable, to God, he bids them *Cease to do evil, and learn to do well*; and *David* directs the man who would live long and see good days, to *Eschew evil, and do good*. Which is in truth the Summ of the Christian, as well as the Moral Law; and imports the very same thing, which the Apostles under the new Testament express, *by dying unto Sin and living unto Righteousness*. And that This is the very end and business of the Gospel, is evident from *St. Paul*, who comprises the substance of it all in this one point of a virtuous Conversation. *The grace of God, that bringeth salvation, hath appeared unto all men*; To what purpose; Or how it does it bring salvation? Even thus, *Teaching us, that denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and, godly in this present world*. So that

Mai. 1.

Psal. 34.

Rom. 6.

Pet. 1. 2.

Tit. 2. 11,  
12.

that the Scriptures, in these and sundry other passages, reduce the whole Practical part of a Christian's Duty to Two general heads; The declining, and withstanding all Temptations to Vice, and The Exercise of all Piety and Virtue. With respect to the Former, our Life is often termed a Warfare, a Fight, a striving for Mastery; and Good men are stiled Soldiers, men that are continually upon their guard, careful not to be surpris'd by their enemies, and in a constant disposition to resist and repel them. In regard of the Latter, we are represented as Labourers, Husbandmen, Sowers of good Seed, Traders with our Master's Talents, Stewards, wise Merchants, and the like; because, by the Exercise of good works we purchase to our selves a good inheritance, we return our Lord his own with Interest, we approve our selves good and faithful Servants, we Till and Dress our Lord's Vineyard, we bring in a prodigious increase of Treasure, and are sure to reap in the general Harvest of the last day, in proportion to that which we have sown.

These then are the two main Instruments of our Salvation, which we are bound perpetually to use and attend to; and they must ever go hand in hand; For neither of them singly is sufficient for our purpose. Innocency of Life, without doing Good, will give us no Title to the recompence of the Just; and Good works, without a pure unblemished conversation, will not atone for our Sins and Lusts, nor excuse us from the doom of the wicked. The *Sacrifices* and *Prayers* of polluted men are declared by God to be an abomination; and they, who served him in the ordinances appointed by himself, were reject-ed as hypocrites and unworthy, while their hands

2 Tim. 12.

4, 5, 6.

Matth. 20.

2 Tim. 2.

6.

Gal. 6.

Matth. 25.

Luke 16.

Matth. 13.

Isa. 1. &amp;

58.

hands were full of blood, and they fought their own pleasures, and did their own works. Again, the Virgins in the Parable reaped no advantage from the purity of that state, while Oyl was wanting in their Lamps, and their good Works did not shine before men; and, in the account of the last judgment, we find no actual Sin charged upon the Goats on the left hand; the Omission of good Works, was of it self sufficient to exclude them from Heaven, and sink them into everlasting punishment. From all which we may learn the noble perfection of a Christian Life, if performed as it ought to be; How bright a Creature is He, who wilfully admits no stain in his Mind, or his Life; how useful and profitable a Servant, who neglects no opportunity of exercising all those Virtues, which fall within the compass of his Practice!

## S E C T. I.

## Of Avoiding of Sin.

AS to the *First* of these, it is evident, God hath placed us in a state of danger and temptation. And these we are commanded to strive and watch against with all our might; to do it manfully, diligently, constantly, sincerely; because, as oft as we give ground and yield to the Enemy, we revolt from God, and are Traitours and Rebels to the Majesty of Heaven. Hence we are called upon, if occasion shall require, *to resist even unto blood striving against sin*, to forego our very Lives, rather than our Duty. And, in the Epistle to the *Ephesians*, we are particularly warned of the hazard of this combat, and how we ought to be provided for it:

Heb. 12.

Ephes. 6.

*Be strong, my Brethren, in the Lord, and in the power*

of his might. Put on the whole Armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace. Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery Darts of the wicked: And take the helmet of salvation, and the Sword of the spirit, which is the word of God. So great need is there of our going out into the field well appointed against the Adversary of Souls; and when we are thus prepared for the conflict, our care must be to use this Armour well, to discharge the duty of our respective posts, and to obey the Orders of our Leader punctually, for otherwise we fight to no purpose. And therefore St. Paul observes to his Son Timothy, that God expects the same regular proceedings with those of the Olympick Games then in use, and, alluding to Them, he says, *If a man strive also* 2 Tim. 2. *for mastery, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully; i. e. unless he both exert himself vigorously, and observe the Rules prescribed for winning the Prize.* To the same purpose the other Apostles exhort us *to resist the devil,* Jam. 4. *and his wicked instruments, to be sober and vigilant,* 1 Pet. 5. *considering what sort of enemy we have to encounter;* 1 John 2. *and by no means to think our selves at any time absolutely safe, but to continue ever mindful, that we live in a state of War, and such as must not have an end, so long as we continue to live here in this Body.*

You wonder perhaps, how it comes to pass, that our blessed Lord, having done so much to conquer this mortal Enemy, and the power of Sin in him, should yet expose his followers to so many difficulties, and make it necessary for  
Them



Them to fight after his Example. But one evident Reason of this is implied in that passage to *Timothy*, that none can be crowned without striving lawfully. God did not think fit to cast away the Joys of Heaven, upon those, who had done nothing for them; and therefore the Reward, which always supposes a work antecedent to it, is suspended upon this Condition;

Rev. 2.17. *To him that overcometh will I give the hidden Man-*

Rev. 3.21. *na. And again, To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me on my Throne; even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father on his Throne.*

In which last words, there is another Reason of this proceeding discovered, wherein we ought to find very great and sensible satisfaction; For, how could Almighty God better express his care and kindness, than by appointing, that we should be made conformable to the Image of his dear Son? Remember, Christian, that in all thy hardships thou followest the Captain of thy Salvation, and art travelling to glory, through the same rugged paths, which He did not disdain to tread before thee. Thy hope and desire is to be crowned with Him, and it would ill become thee to grudge the same terms of obtaining Thy crown, which he submitted to for His. Combat and Conquest exalted Him to the right hand of God, and These will bring Thee into the Joy and presence of thy Lord. 'Tis upon this, as the last most powerful, and most comfortable consideration, that the Apostle fixes, to sustain the *Hebrews* under the heavy burden of Persecution and Affliction;

Hebr. 12. *Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us. Looking unto Jesus, the Au-*  
 2, 3. *thor*

*thor and finisher of our faith, who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the Throne of God. And again, Consider him --- lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.*

Such was the Encouragement given by St. Paul, such the Exhortation grounded upon it : So reasonable, that we should contend earnestly, and bend our utmost force, against all temptations to sin ; Because, by so doing only, can we shew our selves Soldiers fit to be listed under the Banner of this gallant Leader, and dutiful Children of His, and our common Father, who hath prepared so glorious an Inheritance for his suffering Sons. So manifestly do our hardships themselves contribute to our advantage ; so eminently do they promote the Glory, and evidence the power of Christ ; in that he was not only able to vanquish the Devil in his own divine person, but strengthens us by the assistance of his heavenly grace, and overcomes him daily in his faithful servants and followers. Who, though, of themselves, miserably poor and weak, yet find their natural impotence marvellously succoured and supported ; and, in the power of their Lord's Might triumph and gain to themselves glorious Crowns. And This, no doubt, is one excellent Reason, why, notwithstanding the guilt of Original Sin be taken off by Christ's death, and washed away in Baptism, yet the corrupt motions and seeds of that evil Concupiscence are suffered still to remain in our hearts. Not for our prejudice, but for our Exercise and Tryal : To minister occasions for combat, and matter for Victory here, and Glory hereafter. And O ! The Wisdom and Goodness of our gracious God ! How truly tender is  
This

This Father of his Children, who so contrives their Duty, that even That, which gives them the greatest trouble, is not only a necessary proof of their obedience, but converted into an Instrument of their greatest advantage!

Upon this view, it is, that St. *James* animates the Christians to whom he writes, bidding them  
 Jam. i. 2. *account it all Joy when they fall into divers Temptations*; and, reason good they have to do so, since  
 1 Cor. 10. 13. *St. Paul* assures us, that *God will not suffer his Servants to be tempted above that they are able*. Our blessed Lord, in these conflicts, takes great delight in observing our courage and Conduct; he stands by, and looks on, and pours in seasonable recruits; and This, not only as St. *Stephen* discerned him, in the outward sufferings for the testimony of the Truth; but in every sort of tryal, when we are engaged with the lusts of the Flesh, with the allurements of the World, with the wicked suggestions and subtle insinuations of the common enemy of Souls. He sustains us during the action, he comforts us when it is over, and rewards our constancy with Joys unspeakable. How happy then are we to serve so good a Master, so solicitous for our success, so careful to promote it, so ready to help in time of need? With what undaunted resolution should we take the field under a Commander, who suffers none to fall, or be harmed, but Cowards and Renegades, such as run away and dare not stand to their Arms, or such as place an undue confidence in their own strength, and do not rely upon His aid and protection!

Having thus accounted briefly for the Wisdom and Goodness of God, in making this life a state of war and hazard, notwithstanding the conquest

conquest himself hath gained over our Mortal Enemy ; I must now apply my self to consider, after what manner we ought to behave our selves in this Engagement. What diligence and circumspection, what vigour and constancy, what severity and resolution is requisite on our part. For, though this sting of sensuality be left behind for our advantage, yet it is a most troublesome and dangerous, a pestilent and deadly Poison, lurking in our Bowels, and, if it be not nicely watched, and crushed betimes, such as will certainly prove our disease and death. St. Paul hath described to us the condition of such men, where it is suffered to gather head, *I see another Law in my members*, Rom. 7. *warring against the Law of my mind, and bringing me into the Law of Sin, which is in my members. O! wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord.* Even Those, who are baptized, and are confirmed in goodness, are often assaulted by this domestick Enemy. They feel a secret and strong Propension to Evil, even when they are fully convinced, that they ought not to commit it. And, for this corrupt Byass of Nature thus depraved, nothing is a match, but the Grace of God ; nothing an Antidote against this Venom, but the Blood of Jesus ; none able to deliver us from this Tyrant, but he who hath by his death bound the strong man, and spoiled his house. To this Grace our own diligence and co-operation must not be wanting, for he will not save us without our own concurrence. And therefore the Apostle tells us, how he managed himself in this encounter ; *So fight I, not as one that beateth the Air* ; not idly, or at random, like Fencers when they flourish their  
I. Swords

23, 24, 25.

1 Cor. 9.

Swords for pomp and in diversion: But he fell on sinartly, and shewed himself in very good earnest. *I keep under my body, says he, and bring it into subjection, lest after I have preached to others, I myself should be a Cast-away.*

Observe this, ye negligent and effeminate Christians; that either decline this combat wholly, or behave your selves carelessly and delicately in it. See this chosen vessel of God, after being taken up into the third heaven, and admitted to partake of mysteries ineffable, see him continually with sword in hand, beating down the rebellious appetite by painful severities, and mortification of the fleshly and sensual part; making this, not only a subject, but a slave, to his nobler and rational; using it with rigour, keeping it at due distance, having it at his beck, not suffering it to step or look aside, not to lift up so much as a finger without his allowance; and then consider, what will become at last of all your nicety, and fond indulgence: or what success you must look for, who cherish Treachery at home, and encourage a malepert Servant, ready to fly in your face upon the least connivence, and sure to take part with your Enemy against you!

Nor may we think this rigour something peculiar to the perfection of an Apostle, for the same strict discipline is enjoyed as absolutely necessary to every common Christian. *Morally therefore your members which are upon the Earth;* and how they must be mortified he tells us, by commanding us to guard all the approaches to Fornication, Uncleanness, Evil Concupiscence, Covetousness, &c. He makes this the distinguishing Character of a Christian. *They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections*

Col. 3.

Gal. 5 24.

and lusts : These are the only means to preserve our Life with God, either here according to the Principle of Regeneration, or hereafter in the happiness of being likened to our Lord in the glories of his Resurrection. *If ye live after the flesh, ye shall dye ; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the Body, ye shall live.* Herein then it is incumbent upon us to exercise our selves; and This is the nature of our Combat, that we chastise and subdue the body, bringing sense and flesh into subjection to the Spirit, to mortify and refuse our corrupt inclinations ; and let Reason and Religion have their just influences, and reign in our minds without controul. He that acts by this Rule is in the way of Life ; he that pampers and makes provision for his Lusts, that indulges Ease and appetite, is in the broad way to destruction. For in this sense too, is that of our Saviour true, *He that loveth his life, shall lose it : If he that labours to make life grateful and pleasant, and to sweeten it by present and sensual delights, shall do it to his great and eternal disadvantage. But, he that hateth his life for Christ's sake shall save it.* He that uses himself hardly, restrains his desires, abominates excesses, subdues and mortifies this sensual principle, for a short life of sobriety and strictness here, shall be an infinite gainer in the end, and find himself abundantly recompenced by a Life of happiness unspeakable and eternal.

Hence hath this War against Sin and Concupiscence been always prosecuted with such vehement application by the best of Christians in all Ages. They esteemed it a small thing to abstain from such raging wickedness, as is a Scandal to the sober sense of Mankind, or even

from the act of other Sins forbidden in the Gospel; but thus carried their point a great deal farther, and would not allow so much as the inward and secret consent of the Heart. For thus our Lord hath taught us, that from the instant of the Will agreeing to the Temptation, the Sin is committed before God; though fear, or shame, or want of opportunity, or any other accidental hindrance, prevent its breaking out into actual commission. For it is very observable, that St. *James* hath distinguished three Steps or Degrees, by which Sin advances to Perfection: And these are *Suggestion*, *Delight*, and *Consent*. The First is the Enemy's work; the Second proceeds from the temper of our sensual and depraved Appetite; the Last is the result of our own Reason and Choice. The First may be without any fault of ours; The Second ordinarily proceeds from some neglect of putting a better bent upon our Affections, and drawing them off from the love and relish of sensitive Objects; the Last always renders us guilty before God. The Seed of Sin is sown by the First, it is cherished and brought forward by the Second, but it arrives to Perfection in the Last. Since then the inward consent of the Mind is That, in which the very Essence of Sin consists; (For even an action sinful in it self, is not a Sin in Him, who commits the outward act, without such inward consent.) A good Christian is obliged to be vigilant in every one of these degrees. In the First, by industriously avoiding all the occasions of Sin, declining those Persons Conversation, whose Example, or his Discourse, would suggest evil Inclinations, and in short every thing, whereby the Man hath formerly found, or hath reason to suspect himself apt to fall. In the  
Second,

Second, by suppressing those Suggestions early, when they come; not suffering the Soul to feed upon, or delight her self in them, but crushing the Cockatrice in the Egg, and stifling the Motions to Sin, as soon as ever we discover them. But if we should be too remiss in this point too, and not only feel, but relish evil motions; yet at least we must be sure to manage our Third Point; to fight resolutely in defence of our last Entrenchment; and not yield up the consent of the Heart, which is our only Security; for if That be lost, the Foe is within us, and we are undone for ever.

Now, in order to the discharging our Duty in the Two last of these instances especially, for in them lies our greatest danger, there is a Two-fold Caution necessary. The First is, to be exceeding watchful over our own Actions, and Words, nay even our very Thoughts *To fear Psal. 77. 5.*  
*all our own works, with holy Job; and with David, to commune with our own heart, and make diligent search into our Spirit.* Which Exercise of examination we find practised with great exactness by the Saints of the New Testament also. For St. Paul had performed it so nicely, as to affirm, that he was not to his knowledge guilty of any Offence against God; yet would he not, even upon this acquittal of his Conscience, presume to declare himself justified in the Eye of an All-seeing God. And not only these celebrated Saints, but all prudent and good Men, who have had a tender regard to the success of this Spiritual Engagement, have retained this most profitable custom of strictly and frequently examining their own Consciences, and taking the most precise account of their Thoughts, Words, and Actions, that the frailty of Humane Nature  
L 3 could



could qualify them for. The Second Caution is very resolutely and diligently to mortify our Passions, to correct the byas of our depraved Inclinations, to draw our Affections to proper and worthy Objects, and disengage them from such as Sensuality and Concupiscence are apt to entangle them in. Thus we weaken the force of our Enemy, and cut off the Powers he designs to attack us with. For nothing is of more approved Excellence in this respect, than the keeping our Bodies in strict Temperance, subduing them with Abstinence, and corporal Affliction. And in our Age, which is so little addicted to this self-denying part of Religion, it would appear almost incredible, should I undertake to shew, what Care and Zeal the Saints heretofore used in applying this remedy. St. Paul says of himself, and his Brethren the other Apostles, that they served God continually in *Watchings*, in *Fastings*, in *Hunger and Thirst*, in *Cold and Nakedness*. The like Austerities we are told of by many of the Primitive Preachers, and first Professors of Christianity. Among whom afterwards many retired from the World, and sequester'd themselves altogether from Business and Pleasure; that so they might be out of the way and reach of Temptations; They fled to Desarts, and Dens, and Caves; and there exercised such Abstemiousness and Rigour, as are a great reproach to the Sensuality and Luxury of looser and later Ages. They passed whole Days and Nights in Prayer to God, and, having abandoned all thoughts of the World, employ'd their Minds entirely in Pious Meditations, in refining and exalting their Affections, and in putting themselves into such a frame of Soul, as might best prepare them for the Purity of those

2 Cor. 6.

those blessed Regions above, which they thought no Severities, no Pains too great to obtain.

Thus did these blessed and renowned Saints heretofore demean themselves; And All this they esteemed their Duty, for the more effectual subduing Sin, and maintaining a good Conscience unspotted from the World, and unimpaired by the Assaults of their Ghostly Enemy! But alas! my Friends, how do we manage this important Affair? What pains are we content to be at? what Solitude do we express? what guard do we keep upon our Actions or Words, much less upon our Thoughts? Who is there, that fleeth the occasions of Sin? Who indeed rather does not seek and provoke them, and turn his own Tempter? Who labours in mortifying the Flesh and its Appetites; nay, Who does not cherish, and indulge, and inflame them? Are we not led away Captive by the Enemy of Souls at his Will, and yield to every Temptation; swallow every Bait in our way, even though we know there is Poison and Death upon the Hook? Merciful God! what a degenerate State of Christianity are we fallen into! And what can be the End of such wretched negligence? No other certainly, than that of the careless and voluptuous Sinner, described by Solomon; *I discerned a Man void of understanding, Prov. 7. and behold there met him an Harlot, subtle of heart: With much fair Speech she caused him to yield, with the flattering of her Lips she forced him: He goeth after her as an Ox to the Slaughter, as a Bird hasterh to the Snare, and knoweth not that it is for his Life.*

What is here said of One, is true of every kind of Temptation. The Compliance wounds our Souls to Death, and brings them into Bon-

- dage to a mortal and merciless Enemy. We disarm and enfeeble our selves by negligence, and vicious habits, and have nothing but a miracle of Grace left for our deliverance. *Who-soever committeth Sin is the Servant of Sin*, ( says our blessed Saviour ) and ( the Wise Man ) *The wicked shall be holden with the Cords of Iniquity*. These, like a Strong Chain, entangle and compass him in ; a Chain, that we cannot see to the End of, and whose first Link is fastned in Hell it self. And by what degrees it draws us down thither, some Holy Fathers have observed in this manner : Suggestion draws on Thought, Thought engages our Affection, Affection produces Delight, Delight perswades our Consent, Consent advances into Acts, Acts beget Habits, Habits harden and tempt us to Despair of Mercy, Despair defends the Sins it commits ; after which follow Glorifying in Wickedness, Defiance of God, and Contempt of, and Scoffing at Religion, which is as it were the beginning of, and entrance upon Damnation it self. To these unretrievable Miseries are wretched Men reduced, for want of timely care in resisting Temptations, and in restraining the motions of their sensual Appetites. For ( as the Son of Sirach well observes ) *If thou givest thy Soul the desires that please her, she will make thee a laughing Stock to thy Enemies*. And, Is it possible, that Men should be so stupid in their own apparent and incurable Dangers ? The World is now grown to that desperate pass, of *drinking up Iniquity as Beasts do Water*, without scruple or remorse ; so far from doubt or examination, that Heaven and Hell are esteemed no better than Dreams and Fables, the imaginations of a tick Fancy ; Sobriety is Preciseness ; Religion Singularity ;
- Mor-
- John 8.
- Prov. 5.
- Ecclus 18.  
31.
- Job 15

Mortification Madnes: Men *make their Belly their God*, and *glory in their Shame*; but whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, the Apostle hath pronounced their doom; for the *End of such* most certainly is *Destruction*. Phil. 3.

He therefore, who does not only assume, but expects benefit by, the Name of a Christian, will beware of this dangerous Snare, and apply himself to withstand and correct the inclinations of depraved Nature, early and in good earnest. He will crush the Head of the Serpent, as soon as ever he begins to wind himself into his Soul; and take such methods, as the *Second Part* of this Treatise shall direct. In the mean while, that which hath been already said, leaves him (I ought not to doubt) abundantly convinced, of the mighty importance and necessity of this Care; and the complicated, the dismal, the unspeakable Mischiefs, into which Men are betrayed for want of diligence and watchfulness in the waging of this Spiritual War.

## SECT. II.

### Of Doing Good.

**I** Now proceed to the Second Branch of a Christian's business; which consists in the Improvement of Virtue, and the Exercise of Good Works. And in this regard it is, that we find Such in Scripture resembled to Labourers, to Husbandmen, to Stewards, to Merchants, and the like. With respect to Men considered under these Capacities, they are advised to *Sow to themselves in Righteousness*, that *they may reap in mercy*; they are told, that *to him that soweth, Righteousness shall be a sure Reward*. Hos. 10. 12. Prov. 11. 18.

They

- Eccles. 9. 10. They are admonished, *Whatsoever their hand findeth to do, to do it with their might*; They are put in mind by St. Paul, that Jesus Christ came into the World for this very purpose, *to purify unto himself a peculiar People, zealous of Good Works*; and that Christians are *God's Workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto Good Works*: Their Condition is represented by our Lord himself, under the Figure of Servants, entrusted with Talents by their Master, who is gone into a far Countrey to receive to himself a Kingdom, and hath left orders, that they should *traffic till he come*; and that, at that coming, he will not fail to require an account, to reward their Diligence and Fidelity, and to punish their Sloth and Unfaithfulness. These, and many other, passages make it most evident, that the Life and Calling of a Christian in this World is designed for a State of Labour and Diligence, and great improvement; Or, as St. Paul expresses it, *to be fruitful in every good work, and increase in the knowledge of God*: That, the time allowed us here below is the Season of Sowing and Planting; the day of Merchandise, to make a wise Bargain for the Kingdom of Heaven: For so shall the painful, the industrious, the provident have Praise of God, and an advantageous return for all his Toil and Expence, such as will certainly be the making of him for ever: But the slothful and negligent shall be overwhelmed with Confusion, and Misery, with everlasting Poverty and Contempt. Thus are those observations of the Wise-man most true, in a mystical and spiritual Sense also: *The hand of the diligent maketh rich. He that tilleth his Land shall increase his Heap*; and with respect to the time of Old Age, the time of Death, and the distant Con-

Concerns of an Eternity, in which we shall have nothing to subsist upon, but what we lay up now, and carry with us from hence, may that Reproof be addressed to every careless Christian; *Go to the Ant, thou Sluggard, consider her ways, and be wise; Which having no guide, over-seeer, or ruler, provideth her Meat in the Summer, and gathereth her Food in the Harvest.* And This indeed is the most excellent, the most profitable Wisdom, to gather a Bank for the time to come; and prepare for our Journey into that Countrey, where there are no fresh Provisions to be had. This is that Wildom, to which the Son of Sirach with such variety of moving Arguments invites us. *Come unto her, as one that Ploweth and Soweth, and wait for her good Fruits; thou shalt not toil much in Labouring about her, but thou shalt eat of her Fruits right soon. She is very unpleasant to the ignorant; he that is without understanding will not remain with her. But come thou to her with thy whole Heart, and keep her ways with all thy Power: For at the last thou shalt find her Rest; and that shall be turned to thy Joy.*

Prov. 6. 6, 7, 8.

Eccles. 6. 19. &amp;c.

For the obtaining which Joy it is, that St. Paul at every turn importunes Men with such holy vehemence, that they would abound in good works; that they would do them at all times, to all Men; that they would do them with cheerfulness, and not grow weary of so excellent a Practice; Assuring us, that our Labour shall not be in vain in the Lord; that God will not forget their love who minister to the Saints; and that he would be in some sort unrighteous, if he should. This is the End aimed at by our Blessed Saviour, in his Parable of the Unjust Steward, whose prudence and forecast we are exhorted to imitate, in making to our selves friends of the Mammon of

Gal. 6.

2 Cor. 8. 9.

1 Cor. 15.

58 Heb. 6. 10.

Joh. 9.4.

of Unrighteousness, that when we fail, they may receive us into everlasting Habitations. And in a word, This Grace of Liberality, and Charity, and All others, which may adorn the Gospel of Christ, and the Conversation of his Followers, we are frequently called upon to set about in good earnest, while we have time, and our day lasteth, considering, as our Lord hath given us warning, that *the Night draweth on, wherein no Man can work.* And here again we may find but too just matter for Shame and Confusion, if we would state the comparison between our own and the earlier Ages of the Gospel: The diligence and indefatigable pains They bestowed upon cultivating their Souls; And the senseless ill Husbandry and Laziness we are guilty of. The Zeal, with which They cast their Seed into the Ground in vast quantities; the publick Blessings they brought to their generation while living; and the noble and useful Monuments of their Charity, by which They speak to all Posterity when dead: The Pious Foundations and Endowments, set apart for the promotion of Learning, the Improvement of useful Arts, the more undisturbed exercise of Religion, the Relief of the Poor, the Lame, the Blind, the Aged; The Sums expended in Service of the Publick, and such Conveniences, as are not the least useful, though least regarded, instances of Charity. These and many more good Works were then the Gifts of Christians; Not only out of their superfluity and abundance, but by straitning themselves in the Conveniences, nay the very Necessaries, of Life; and retrenching the Fortunes of their Families; that so they might contribute to the Benefit of Souls, to the Honour of God, to the Advantage of Mankind, and ensure

sure to their Children, the Blessing and Bounty of a better Father in Heaven. But alas! We are so far from giving Necessaries, as very rarely to moderate our Vanities, or take off from our Sins for the sake of doing Good. Grandeur, and Equipage, and Port, are now lookt upon as more indispensable than Charity; and those Creatures, which contribute merely to our Pomp, or our Diversion, more tenderly, more sumptuously maintained, than the naked and hungry Members of Christ: So void of Piety and Charity, so stupid and brutish are We; So worthless, so unprofitable, so scandalous, if put into the Balance with those who were formerly Christians indeed, and manifestly proved their Faith by their Works.

From the two heads of Duty treated of in this Chapter, I beg my Reader to observe two things.

*First*; What a Lovely, and Excellent Creature a truly good Christian is; whose constant care it is to keep himself and every action unblemished with Sin; and whose perpetual work it is to serve God, and to profit Men, by all possible ways, that his Prudentest consideration can suggest, and his utmost power extend to. Were these things performed by us in Perfection, according to the Pattern our Blessed Master set us, what a Heaven upon Earth would this make? No Malice or Contention, no Violence or Deceit, no Wickedness or Impurity of Manners; no Law necessary to contain Men in their Duty, but only Religion, the Law of Christ our King. For this alone would purify our Hearts and Intentions, would unite our Affections, would inflame our Devotions, and equal us to Angels, in Concord, in Zeal, in Innocence.

But



Mat. II.  
21, 22.

But alas ! by abandoning these two great Lines of our Duty, the very Heathen and Infidels are more civilized, less dissolute, less profane than We. Which, besides the dishonour it reflects upon our Lord and his Religion, must needs aggravate our condemnation exceedingly ; and make our case hereafter the same with those places which our Saviour upbraids for having wrought his Miracles, and preached his Divine Doctrines there without effect. *Wo unto thee Chozazin, Wo unto thee Bethsaida ; for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon, which have been done in You ; they would have repented long ago, in Sackcloth and Ashes. Wherefore I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable in the day of Judgment for Tyre and Sidon, than for You.*

Secondly. We may likewise take notice from hence, how very different Lives, the Virtuous and the Wicked lead in This, and consequently, how very different Portions they receive in that other World, where God shall render to every Man according to his Works. The sober and vigilant Christian doth not only abstain ( so much as humane Frailty may ) from all Sin, especially from such as is willful and mortal, which All, by God's assistance, may avoid ; but by continual striving and inflexible resistance, he strengthens his Title to a Crown in Heaven. But the Careless and Unwary consents to every Lust, complies with every Temptation, and heaps Sin upon Sin, without measure, number, or end. The diligent Christian does not only preserve a Conscience void of offence toward God and toward Man, but does ( at least in disposition and desire ) perform infinite good Works ; and where his Abilities fail, that disposition and desire are accepted and accounted to

to him. But the dissolute and wicked is neither good in Deed, nor so much as in Will. He hath a long Black Catalogue of Evils to answer for ; and he employs his Wit, his Affections, his Body, his Strength, and all his Faculties and Powers, in the Service of Iniquity, and to the advancing the Kingdom of his own, and Christ's declared Enemy. So that, as the Other obtains increase of Grace here, and of Glory hereafter, this Wretch *Treasures up to himself wrath against the day of Wrath*, and takes pains to ensure Vengeance and Damnation. And, since each of these live and dye so contrary to one another, can we wonder, that their Condition should be equally opposite in the next World, where Men's Fate depends entirely upon what they had done in this ?

Let us then learn to be wise, while we have Time before us. If we find, upon enquiry, that we have gone in a wrong way hitherto, let us thank God, for the mighty benefit of being brought to a Sense of our Errour, before it be too late to amend it. Many, no doubt, are now howling in Hell Fire, who never thought of this matter at all ; but who, if they had been awakened, as we are, or ought to be, now by these very Considerations, might perhaps have escaped those dreadful Torments, to which they are for ever given up without any possibility of redress. Take care then, my Christian Friends, to convert this Mercy to your Advantage, and not to your deeper and more insupportable Condemnation. Cast not away willfully your precious Souls ; those Jewels, which the Son of God thought worth Redeeming at so dear a Price, which He so passionately desires to Save ; and to ennoble with the Riches  
of

of his Grace and everlasting Glory. O give them up entirely to his Disposal, lodge them in safe Hands, and be content, for such a Recompence, to live according to his Directions. Remember, you must dye; and therefore do that very thing this moment, which, when you come to dye, you would give the whole World that you had done. And, because the consideration of our later End is a most powerful Motive to do well; and Death and Judgment are the very Things, which must determine our Affairs for all Eternity; I cannot pursue this Argument of a Good Life better, than by offering in the next place some quickning, and seasonable Reflections upon these two most important *Points*.

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### C H A P. VII.

#### *Of the Last Great Day of Account.*

**T**HE greatest Wisdom of Servants in this Life is, duly to remember what sort of Master they have to deal with, what Account he will require of the Trust reposed in them, and what Punishments he hath power to inflict, in case of Unfaithfulness or Neglect. And since every Christian stands in the same Relation to Almighty God; nothing can be more advisable, than to consider very seriously, what reckoning he is like to be called to, and how his Lord will proceed in it; whether he is to Audit his Accounts with an easy, or a mild, or a weak; or else with an austere, and a strict, Master; One that will be most exact in his Enquiries, and is mighty to revenge any Failure of Duty,  
and

and Breach of Trust. And of this matter we cannot remain long in doubt, if we will but attend to these Two Things.

*First:* The Method God took, to publish and promulge his Law to This World; with what marks of a wonderful and dreadful Majesty; with what Thunder, and Trumpets, and Earthquakes, and other Circumstances of Terroure that Rule of Life, contained in the Ten Commandments was issued out to the People of *Israel*. *Exod. 19.*

All which *St. Paul* urges, as an Argument *Hebr. 12.* how exceedingly afraid to break this Law Men ought to be. For it is a known Case, that such dreadful Pomp is never used to no purpose; and that the Publication of any Law is not near so terrible, as the execution of it upon Offenders.

*Secondly:* Another Consideration, which may give us right Notions of this Matter, is that of the Judge, or Lord Himself, to whom we are accountable. Now we must all appear before the *2 Cor. 5.* Judgment-seat of Christ, says the Apostle, that *10.* every one may receive the things done in his Body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. This Truth our Lord himself hath instructed us in, by sundry Parables; particularly that of the Talents. He hath told us the Manner and End of his Appearance; *The Son of Man* *Matt. 16.* shall come in the Glory of his Father, with his holy *27.* Angels, and then shall he reward every Man according to his works: He hath warned us how far that Account shall extend; that for every idle word *Matt. 12.* Men shall speak, they shall answer for it at the Day *36.* of Judgment. We are likewise instructed elsewhere, that this Account shall be exquisitely nice and severe; that the least Errours and Offences shall not be forgotten or over-look'd:

**Eccles. 12.** *For God shall bring every work into Judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.*

**Hebr. 9. 27.** *Now of this Judgment we may observe two kinds, intimated in Scripture. The one Particular, which passes upon every Soul, immediately upon her departure out of the Body: For*

**Matth. 25. 31, &c.** *it is appointed for all men once to die, and after that the Judgment. The other General, which shall be executed upon the whole World, summoned together, at the last great Day. And of this we are to understand Christ's Coming in Glory.*

**Luke 16.** *Now, though in the former of these, the Soul receives it's irrevocable Sentence, (as may be gathered from the Parable of the Rich-man and Lazarus, assigned to their respective states and apartments of Rest and Torment, as soon as they died) yet are there many excellent Reasons, why God, besides this Private and Personal, hath ordained, and reserved Men to another Tryal; which shall be Universal, Publick, and Manifest, performed in view of the whole World. As particularly These that follow.*

1. *First*, That the Bodies of Men which shall be awakened, and brought back from the Grave, may partake with their Souls, in that Eternal Bliss or Woe, designed for the Reward or Punishment of those Virtues or Vices, in which the Body did likewise bear a part, while conversing with, and united to, the Soul in this present Life. 2. *Secondly*, That Christ, who in the days of his Flesh upon Earth, was dishonoured and despised, may once in the end of the World appear in full Lustre of Majesty and Power, to the utter confusion of his Enemies; who after that Day, shall never behold him more. 3. *Thirdly*, That the Wicked and the Righteous may receive

ceive their Recompence openly, to the greater discomfort of the Former; the more triumphant Joy of the Latter; and the clearer manifestation of the Righteous Proceedings of this Judge. To which some have added 4. a *Fourth Reason*, viz. That the Good and Ill Effects of what Men have done here, by their Examples, their Instructions, their Books, and the like, may also come into the Account: Which cannot so conveniently be reckoned, or rewarded while this World continues; because the Effects, of which they laid the Foundations in their Life-time, may be perpetually increasing, so long as there are Successions of Men, capable of being profited, or prejudiced by them. Thus some have been of Opinion, that *St. Paul* (for Instance) receives a daily Addition to his Glory and Happiness, in proportion to the Benefit received by his Writings and holy Life, in every Age of Christianity; that the old Hereticks are more and more tormented, as more Souls are corrupted by their pestilent Errours; that dissolute Poets, and other propagators of Vice, have their Reckoning inflamed by all the Debauchery, which the Composures they leave behind them, occasion in the World: That the Negligence of Parents, and Masters, of Magistrates, and Ministers, shall add to their Condemnation, as the Miscarriages of Persons under their Care shall have grown by their Connivence, or the ill Principles countenanced and instilled by them. But now after this General Judgment, the state of Discipline is at an end: No Man then is capable of becoming better or worse, in his Moral Capacity: And therefore This is a proper time for a Final Sentence, because it can have a full view, and take in all the Good and

Evil, done or occasioned, from the first Beginning, to the absolute consummation of the World.

Of this Last General Judgment then, which ratifies the Particular one passed before, and makes up the whole Account, with all Mankind, the Scripture often admonishes us most carefully to meditate; to look upon it, as our most important Affair; and to apply it to our Consciences, as the most powerful restraint from Sin, which mortal and frail Men can possibly have recourse to. And therefore, *knowing this Terror of the Lord*, I shall, with the Apostle, endeavour to *Persuade Men*, by laying before them some of those things delivered in Scripture concerning it. And that with regard (1) To the preparatory Dispensations antecedent to it; (2) The Proceedings of that Day it self: and (3) The Consequences of that Judgment, or the different states of Men afterwards, according to the Sentence then pronounced upon them.

### SECT I.

*Of the Dispensations Preparatory to the General Judgment.*

TO beget in Men a more awful Sense of this terrible Day, and to express the Majesty and the horrors of it; Almighty God hath thought fit to ordain certain Tokens of it's Approach, and to reveal to us what they shall be, that we may the better provide to meet our God, and not be surpris'd with that Coming; upon a due Preparation for which our All depends. Some of these our Blessed Lord hath described thus to his Disciples, *When ye shall hear of*

Luke 21.  
9, &c.

of wars and commotions, be not terrified; for these things must first come to pass, but the end is not by and by. Nation shall rise against Nation, and Kingdom against Kingdom: And great Earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences, and fearful sights, and great signs shall there be from Heaven. Thus are the grievous and manifold afflictions, which usher in the Day of Judgment; so many Warnings and Representations of the Miseries to commence at that Day: And our Lord (says St. Gregory) declares, That the end should not immediately follow the Wars and Commotions; because it is fit, that great variety of temporal Calamities should go before, to awaken in Men the Impression and Dread of those eternal Miseries, which shall come after. But, besides the Miseries among Men, there are other Evidences of this Day, to be attended to; for all Nature shall conspire in giving warning of it; and every Creature, every Element, proclaim it's dreadful motion toward us. There shall be signs (says our Lord *Math. 24.* again) in the Sun, and in the Moon, and in the Stars. For the Sun shall be darkned, and the Moon *Mark 13.* shall not give her light; and the Stars shall fall from Heaven, and the Powers of the Heavens shall be shaken. The Heavens shall pass away, and the Elements shall melt with fervent heat: The Earth also, and all the works that are therein, shall be burnt up. And upon the Earth shall be distress of Nations, with *2 Pet. 3.* perplexity: the Sea and the waves roaring; Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things, which are coming on the World. To which account by our Lord himself, if we add *Ezek 38.* the Prophecies of Ezekiel, Daniel, and Joel; and *Dan. 7.* *Joel 2.* St. John in his Revelation, nothing can be expressed in terms more moving, more amazing. *Revel. 6.* *9. & 11.*



1 Pet. 4.  
17.

For who can reflect on those incomprehensible Terrours, without Fear and Trembling? What manner of Day do we think will that be, when the Heavens shall put on mourning; when this whole Earth shall totter, and quake as a Leaf before the Wind; when the Sun and Moon shall lose their Light; the Stars drop from their Orbs; the Sea forsake it's Channels, the Earth be drown'd in a Deluge of Blood, and the whole World at once on a flaming fire? Can we wonder, that even Angels and Just Men, are said to be afraid at that Day? And then, according to St. Peter's way of Reasoning, *If the Righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the Ungodly and the Sinner appear?* What shall become of the careless and dissolute Christian, when he shall see such an Ocean of Miseries rushing in upon him? O that Men would think upon this Torrent of Woes, while they may be diverted and escaped! O that they would awake now, and prepare to stand firm at that hour, when the last Trumpet shall awake them, whether they will or not! That we would all follow St. Jerome's Example, and *neither eat, nor drink, nor sleep, nor take any matter whatsoever in hand, without the awful remembrance of this Day*, and thinking how we shall then be able to answer, for what we are now doing! For to this purpose are all the Warnings of this Day given us, and the solemn Preparations to it, as lively as words can paint them: And fit indeed they are to usher in that, which makes the second Branch of my present Argument.

## SECT. II.

*The Proceedings of that Day it self.*

WHEN the necessary Preliminaries are over, and all things in readiness for the Judge's coming in, *Then shall all the Tribes of the Earth see the Son of Man coming in the Clouds, with Power and great Glory. And he shall send his Angels at midnight with a great cry, and they shall gather together his Elect, in the twinkling of an Eye, from the one end of Heaven to the other. Thus shall he mount his Throne in Majesty, terrible, as his former Appearance was despicable and humble; and the meek Lamb once slain for the Sins of the World, shall put on the vengeance of an angry Lion. For who may abide the day of his coming, when the very Mountains shall melt before him? When the Lord shall be mighty and strong, as a tempest of Hail, and a destroying Storm, as a flood of mighty Waters overflowing, which casteth down all in it's way?*

Matth. 24.  
25.

Mark 13.  
25.

Matt. 12.

Luke 21.

1 Cor. 15.

Mal. 3.

Isai. 64.

Isai. 28.

Dan. 7. 9,

10.

Rev. 20.

The Judge then being seated, and all the Nations of the Earth convened before him, the Scriptures proceed to describe the order of this Process. *I beheld (says Daniel) and the Ancient of days did sit; thousand thousands ministred unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him; the Judgment was set, and the Books were opened. And all those that were dead, says St. John, were judged out of the things written in those Books; every one according to his works. So that these Books, by which our Cause must be try'd, shall be the Evidences produc'd of Men's Actions in this Life, the testimony of their own Consciences, and the infallible Records of God's exact*

Observation and Remembrance. Then shall every Creature bear witness against the Reprobate: The Heaven and Earth contrived for their Benefit and Comfort; the Conveniences and Enjoyments of this World, which were abused by their inordinate fondness; the Companions that sinned with them; the good Men afflicted and oppressed by them; the Saints and Ministers of God, whom they have set at nought; but above all, the Mystery of their Redemption, whose Glories then shall be display'd, and vindicated by these Wretches Ruin. These and infinite Blessings shall rise up against them, to reproach and condemn that Ingratitude, which offended so gracious a God; who by so many instances of Love and Goodness, endeavoured in vain to win them to his Service.

Wild. 5.

I, 2.

Luke 23.

Rev. 6.

*Then shall the Righteous stand in great boldness before the face of such as have afflicted him, and made no account of his Labours. But the Wicked shall be troubled with terrible fear; they shall cry to the Hills fall on us, and to the Mountains cover us from the face of Him that sitteth on the Throne, and of the Lamb; for the great Day of his wrath is come. This is that Day of the Lord, cruel with indignation, and fierce anger; to lay the Earth desolate, and to destroy the Sinners out of it. Thy day, O Lord, for so by way of Eminence thou wilt have it called; whereas the time of Tryal in this present Life, thou condescendest to call Our Day. In This Day thou art content to hold thy peace, and patiently to suffer Sinners in their own wicked courses; but in That Day thou wilt vindicate thy Honour, and by the Execution of Justice, make thy self known to the terrour of thine Enemies. For thou shalt then*

then be manifest to all; Good and Bad shall be present at this Work, and none exempted from his portion in it. Therefore, remember, Reader, that what thou now, perhaps too negligently runnest over, thou shalt hereafter see in such perfection, as no words can describe no humane Imagination can conceive.

Good God ! What a Day shall that be, when all the Sons of *Adam* shall meet; when the Earth and Sea give up their Bodies, and Heaven and Hell send back the Souls they possess, to be again united to those Bodies? How will these two old Acquaintance meet? How joyfully the Good, how dolefully the Wicked? The Godly to receive the Bodies they once lived in, to a participation of their Bliss; and therefore These shall exult and sing. But how shall the Damned bear to see those Bodies, which have been the occasions and instruments of their Sin and Misery? Especially knowing that this second Union is only the Beginning of greater and eternal Sorrows? Is it not reasonable to suppose they will curse, and abhor, and bitterly inveigh against every Member and Part, whose Lusts and Excesses were formerly gratified, at the sad expence of eternal Torment and Ruine? Such will be the lamentable condition of sinful Souls at that Day. But alas ! Lamentation will avail them nothing; for the Law must have it's course. For then shall the King divide the Goats *Matt. 25.* from the Sheep. O dreadful Separation ! What would the greatest Princes and Conquerours of this Earth give for the lowest room among the Sheep on the right hand? They who had once the World at will, and all Dignity and Honour in their disposal, would now esteem the Lot of the meanest, and once most despised of God's Elect,

an Advancement more to be coveted, than Crowns and Laurels, the Pomp and Wealth of ten thousand Worlds. Were they to live again, this would be their Choice: For trust me, Reader, we shall think and judge at that Day, after a manner quite different from what we do now. But alas! 'tis too late for Sinners to correct their Opinions then. They must stand to what is past; the Process is begun, the Judge present, whose Power they cannot avoid; whose Wisdom they cannot deceive; whose Equity they cannot bend; whose Anger they cannot appease; whose Determination they cannot change; and from whose Sentence there lyes no Appeal.

O my Friends! how inestimable a Treasure will a good Conscience be at that Day! a Conscience that will bear us out, when Princes and all the Great Ones stand naked and trembling, and have nothing to urge in Bar to the Punishment of those Sins, in which now they glory. Wealth and Power cannot relieve them, the Judge is neither to be aw'd nor brib'd; Submission comes too late, and will not be taken; Intercession of Friends will be ineffectual; their only Mediator is their Judge. What will these Wretches do in this Extremity? whither will they flee then from the Terrours, which now they so very hardly bear to be told of? When they are beset round with Vengeance and Fear, without the least glimpse of Hope or Comfort left? Above, their angry God thundring upon them; Beneath, Hell opening it's Mouth to swallow them up: On the one hand their Sins accusing; on the other, the Devils ready to execute the Sentence of Torment upon them. Within, the Worm of Conscience gnawing their very Heart-strings: Without, damned Souls howl-

howling; and on every side, the whole World burning. O Blessed Jesus! what a case is this! How will the Sinner sustain this Anguish, or what course can he take? To go back, is impossible; to move forward, is intolerable; to stand as he is, will not be allow'd. Death he shall wish for, but that flees from him; To the Mountains he shall cry, but they cannot cover him: No, no; stand there he must, in the presence of his provok'd God, of his abused Saviour; a desperate, forlorn, miserable Wretch; till He, whose Bowels were once so tender as to descend from Heaven, and die for him, shall now without any kind of Relentings utter that dreadful and irreversible Sentence, *Go ye Cursed, into everlasting fire.*

## SECT. III.

*The Consequence of the General Judgment.*

**T**HIS shall be the last Act of that dismal Tragedy: A particular Account whereof our Lord himself hath given in the xxvth of St. Matthew's Gospel, from the 31st Verse to the end of that Chapter: The words themselves are more generally known, than to need repeating; but I would put my Reader in Mind upon this occasion, That, among the Causes, for which the Wicked are there condemned to everlasting Punishment, our Saviour does not alledge, either Unbelief, or any enormous actual Sins, but only the Omission of some good Deeds, and neglecting to extend their Charitable Relief, when they had proper Objects, and fit Opportunities, and sufficient Ability for it. And, because they came not up to this point of Christian Perfection,

fection, therefore they are delivered up to eternal Torments. But who can form to himself any just Idea of the different Resentments, wherewith that Sentence will be entertained? The Saved rejoycing in Hymns of Praise to the Glory of their Saviour: The Damned bewailing, blaspheming, and cursing the hour they were born: The Angels extolling the Equity of that Sentence, which even They who suffer under it, can find no exception against.

Think of the intolerable scoffs and reproaches of those Infernal Spirits, who with a malicious insolence, shall upbraid and deride those very Torments, to which they have betray'd these Wretches. Who first make Souls their Prey, and then insult over their punishment for being so. Think of the eternal separation which shall then be made between the dearest Relations and most intimate Friends: Husbands and Wives, Fathers and Children, Kindred and Acquaintance; some to Happiness, others to Misery, without any hope of seeing or hearing of one another any more: Nay, without so much as pitying the calamitous condition of those we loved most tenderly in this World: Because those partial Fondnesses are all swallowed up in the Joy for God's Glory; which shall then be our only moving Consideration, and minister Delight, when this is magnified by the Execution of Justice, even upon those, whom in this World, Relation, or Friendship, or any other Temporal Engagement, makes dearest to us. O my Soul! which art now taking a distant prospect of these things, but shalt then see them distinctly, and be present at them, what a parting will this be? What Heart would not break? but alas! it cannot then break, and put and end

to

to it's Misery. Think, O ye Children of this World, what will then be the end of all your vain and sensual Delights, your glittering Pomp, and empty Respects, your Riot and Lasciviousness; your Flatterers, and pleasant Companions? These all forsake you, when you need them most; and have left no part behind, but a bitter Remembrance for ever to torment you. Alas! how poor a thing will Riches and Honour, and worldly Grandeur seem at that hour, and how joyful will that Man be, who hath led an honest, painful, virtuous Life, and travelled to Heaven, though through the roughest ways of Poverty, and Affliction, and Contempt? Well is it for that now seemingly wretched Man, that ever he was born; well for him, that ever he was afflicted, and despis'd; so well, that none but God can exprefs or conceive his Happiness.

Let us then reflect how easy a matter it would be, to avoid the dangers of this Dismal Day; would we but set about it speedily, and in good earnest. And This indeed is the very End, for which God hath revealed the thing to us, that we may take warning in time, provide Oyl in our Lamps, and be ready to meet the Bridegroom at his coming. For thus our Lord concludes his severe threatnings with friendly exhortations. *Take heed to your selves; Watch and pray, Mark 13. for ye know not when the time is. And what I say 36, 37. unto you, I say unto all, Watch. And in another Luke 21. place, Take heed to your selves, that your Hearts 34, 36. be not overcharged with Surfeiting and Drunkenness, and Cares of this Life, and so that day come upon you unawares. Watch ye therefore and pray always; that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass; and to stand before the*

Son



*Son of Man.* To the same purpose St. Peter, *The day of the Lord shall come as a Thief in the Night, in the which the Heavens shall pass away, and the Elements shall melt with fervent Heat; the Earth also, and all the Works that are therein shall be burnt up. Seeing then that all these Things shall be dissolved, what manner of Persons ought we to be, in all manner of Holy Conversation and Godliness; Looking for, and hastening to the coming of the Day of God, &c.*

Now by this *Looking for, and hastening unto the Coming of the Day of God*, is meant living as becomes Men, who believe and expect such a Day, examining into our present State, speedy Amendment of Life, and attending to Works of Piety, and Charity; which is the Oyl in our Lamps, and that sovereign Remedy of Souls, to which we may conveniently enough apply the

*Eccles.'18. Wise-man's Advice; Use Physick or ever thou be Sick. Before Judgment examin thy self, and in the Day of Visitation thou shalt find Mercy. Thus St. Paul tells us, that if we would Judge our selves, we should not be Judged of the Lord. But because so very few enter upon these Enquiries, and are careful to make a right Judgment of themselves; what Posture their Souls are in; what Evil they do, and what Good they neglect to do; hence it comes to pass, that so few escape the Dangers of that terrible Day: For few make any Preparation for it, few care to hear or think of this ungrateful Subject: The Advice of Christ and his Ministers is turn'd into a Jest by the Profane; and they, who arrive not at at this hardened Pitch of Wickedness, make but light of it: Watchfulness in our Spiritual Concerns is a Virtue, that but very rarely finds Profelytes. Eat and Drink, for to morrow we Die, is the common*

Voice

Voice of Mankind in the very worst Sense of the Words. Men will not be made sensible of their Cases for fear it should give them Disturbance; and this affected Ignorance, this Spiritual Sleep renders their Destruction past all Remedy. God of his infinite Mercy awaken our Stupid Souls, that we sleep not in Death Eternal; and grant us Grace, *to know in this our Day, the Things that belong unto our Peace*, before that Day of his come, when they shall be *hidden from our Eyes*; or discerned, when it is too late to profit by the Sight of them.

## C H A P. VIII.

*Of the Nature and Guilt of Sin.*

**A**FTER this Explanation of that rigid Account, to be taken of every Man at the last Day, I think my self bound to obviate any mistaken Apprehensions which may arise from hence, concerning the Severity of those Proceedings, as if it exceeded the Nature and Quality of the Offence. This Chapter therefore is intended to shew what is the Reason, that God does upon all Occasions express such irreconcilable Aversion to Sin and Sinners, and persecute them with Indignation and Wrath implacable. For thus the Scriptures declare, That God *hates Iniquity*, that *he abhors them that work Wickedness*: Psal. 5. that the *whole Life* of such Men, their Thoughts, Prov. 15. their Words, nay their very *Prayers* and *Sacrifices* are an Abomination to him; while they Isai. 1. persist in their ungodly Courses. He forbids Psal. 50. such as *hate to be reformed*, *to take his Covenant in* Eccl. 15. *their*

Ezek. 18.  
1 Tim. 2.

*their Mouth*, or to praise his Name : And, if such be God's Resentment against Sin here, we cannot think it strange, that he should deal so Rigorously with it hereafter ; For *God* is not mutable as we are ; the Sinner may change his Ways, but God cannot change his Mind : The Things he Loves or Hates he does so unto the End. And yet the Scriptures make it no less plain, that he loves Men's Souls most tenderly, that he desires not the Death of any Sinner, but would have them live and be saved ; that is, by Repentance and Amendment, while the Season of Reconciliation lasts. But then this admitting Men to Pardon and Salvation, upon no other Terms than a Change of Mind and Manners, shews plainly that his Aversion to the Sin it self is fixt and unalterable ; the Reasonableness whereof may soon appear, to any who consider, what an undutifulness such Men are guilty of, by transgressing his Commands wilfully, and setting light by that Authority that binds them upon our Consciences. What Monstrous and base ingratitude this is in Men, who daily receive innumerable, incestimable Benefits from that Giver of all good Gifts ! Each of which Provocations are sufficient to incur the utmost severity against them, who will neither stand in awe of infinite Majesty, nor be won to better Courses by infinite Mercy.

But there is one Reason above all the rest, which goes to the very bottom of this Matter ; and that is, the horrible Injury we do Almighty God, and the slight we put upon him in every Sin, wilfully committed by us. Which indeed is so great, that no petty Prince upon Earth would endure it at the Hands of any Subject ; and much less can we think that the Lord

of

of Glory, and the King of Kings will suffer an Outrage so often repeated as this, to pass unpunished in his Vassals and Creatures. Now for a right understanding of this Case, we shall do well to observe, that in every deliberate Sin, though we do not attend to, nor are perhaps sensible of it, there passes in the Mind of the Transgressor, a certain Practical Discourse of the Man's Will and Judgment ( as there does in every Instance of a free Choice ) which proceeds in this Method. We lay before us, on One side the convenience of the Sin we are tempted to commit, the Pleasure or the Profit which invites us to it ; And, on the other side, we set against this, God's Displeasure, the loss of his Grace and Favour if we comply with such Temptation. Thus positing, as it were, the Matter under debate, with God in one Scale, and the Advantage we propose by offending in the other, we stand doubtful for a while, which of these ought to be preferred ; but when we comply, and Sin, we cast the Scale on that side, choose the Pleasure, and reject Almighty God ; declare in effect, that we are content to stand to all Hazards, and rather will lose the Favour and Grace of our Maker and Redeemer, than forego the Satisfaction of committing that Sin. Now what can be more Reproachful, what more intolerable, than to set a vile Pleasure above the infinite Majesty and Goodness of God ? Is not this less excusable, than the Dishonour offered Jesus by the Jews, when they chose *Barabbas*, a Robber and Murderer, and crucified the Lord of Life and Glory ? No doubt, however we may think of the Matter, the Sinner hath less to alledge for his own Perverseness, than the very worst of those Jews. They knew not the value

lue and Dignity of the Person refused by them, for had they known him, *St. Peter* bears them Witness they would not have done it; but the Sinner knows this, and yet does it: They rejected *Jesus* once, but he does it often, daily and hourly, even as oft as any Temptation offers, and he yields up his Consent to it. And, if this Consideration be duly weighed, it is no wonder that God should revenge this Dishonour severely, that he should give Men up to the Damnation they have chosen; and not be reconciled to those, who, all their Life long, have treated him after so unworthy and contemptuous a manner.

But besides, there is likewise, in every hardened and habitual Offender, an inveterate Malice against God: He does not only Affront and Despise, but he hates this Majesty on high. If it lay in his Power he would pluck him out of his Throne, and, as it is, he wishes in his Heart, that there were no such Power in being to Observe and Punish him.

This at first View perhaps may seem a heavy Charge, but it is the very Truth of the Case, and does not really over-strain the Point at all. For, let any resolute Sinner search his Conscience to the bottom, and then tell me, whether the Thoughts of a Judge and an Avenger be not so uneasie to him, that, if he could dispose Matters according to his own Will, there should be no Immortality of the Soul, no Reckoning or Recompence after this Life, no Hell, no God at all; but these should all be sacrificed to his own Wicked Lusts, and the secure Enjoyment of his guilty Pleasures. Now, because God is a Searcher of the Heart and Reins, and sees clearly all that lurking Treachery and Malice,

lice, which others very often, and the Man himself sometimes does not discern; therefore he looks upon Sinners as his declared Enemies; and professes open War with those, who, by the Principles of their own Actions, act in Hostility against him. And What, can we think, must become of those Worms of the Earth, when they have thus enraged so powerful an Adversary; when they have wearied out his Forbearance, and extinguished all the relentings of Pity toward them? For thus God describes himself, rushing upon Sinners with a Thirst of Revenge, and taking Delight in their Destruction; *Thus saith the Lord, the Lord of Hosts, Isa. 1. 24. the mighty one of Israel, Aha! I will ease me of mine Adversaries, and avenge me of mine Enemies.* Thus St. Paul calls the Impenitent, *Vessels of Wrath, fitted for Destruction.* And David *Psal. 92. 7,* complains, *that the Unwise will not consider this, 9. neither will the Fool understand it; that when the Ungodly are green as the Grass, and all the Workers of Wickedness do flourish, it is that they shall be destroyed for ever.* The short Prosperity they boast in here shews that they are reserved to endless Miseries hereafter; it must be so, for *Lo thine Enemies O Lord! lo thine Enemies shall perish, and all the workers of Iniquity shall be confounded.* And thus we see both the irreconcilable Enmity between God and Sinners, and the Ground of that Enmity.

But, for the farther Justification of this Severity, let us consider farther, the measure of this Hatred against Sin; what Bounds there are to limit it, or rather indeed, whether it be not infinite, and subject to no Limitation at all. For in truth, the largest Understanding cannot comprehend the greatness of God's Displeasure in

this Case against every mortal and wilful Sin. The Reason whereof is Twofold.

*First*, The incomprehensible Holiness and Purity of God; for, in Proportion as he is better than We, his Aversion to all Wickedness must rise above Ours. Consequently, a Being infinitely Good, must love Goodness, and hate Evil to an infinite degree: Consequently, the Rewards of Goodness, and the Punishment of Evil must be infinite and everlasting: because he can never cease to love the one, and to hate the other.

*Secondly*, The greatness of any Offence is aggravated, in proportion to the Party against whom it is committed. The same Affront, or Blow, to a Peasant, or a Slave, and to a Prince, differ as much as the Quality and Character of these Persons differ; and the Punishment deserved by it rises, as the Crime rises. Now, since every deliberate Sin is a wilful Dishonour and Offence to God, whose Majesty is infinite, the Guilt of every such Sin is infinite, and incurs infinite Hatred and Punishment at God's Hands. This seems to justify those, otherwise seemingly unaccountable Dispensations, of the irrever-sible Damnation of the fallen Angels, for one single Act of Rebellion; of the rigorous Punishment of our first Parents disobedience, by which not only the Offenders themselves were Chastised, but the Ground cursed for their sakes; the Guilt of their Crime transmitted to all their Posterity the wretched Effects of it, as temporal Afflictions, and Sorrow, and Death, entailed upon all Mankind (of whom they were the common Source and Representatives) to the end of the World; Of the Satisfaction required by the Divine Justice for Sin, which would not be

be appeased upon easier Terms; than those of God's own, and only begotten Son taking our Flesh upon him, and in it suffering a most painful and ignominious Death; and so becoming our common Representative in the Expiation, as our first Parents had been in the Transgression. For, though the least of his Sufferings were of infinite Value, by Virtue of His Divine, united to Our humane Nature; yet God ceased not to lay Affliction upon Affliction, he spared him not when bathed in Blood and Water, he heard him in the Agony and Anguish of his Soul inexpressible, beseeching, that *If it were possible the Cup might pass from him*; he heard his doleful Exclamation upon the Cross, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* And yet notwithstanding those strong Cries and Tears, he would not deliver him; but added one Stripe to another, one Pain and Torment to another, till he had breathed his Soul out, and dyed under the Intolerable Burden. And all this to testify his hatred against Sin; and to be a warning, that He, who spared not his innocent and beloved Son, when standing in the place of Sinners, will not spare those Sinners themselves, if they remain obdurate, and will not submit to be reclaimed.

Mat. 26.

Luk. 22.

Mat. 27.

Isa. 53.

Upon the same account it is, that we read so many dismal Threatnings, and astonishing Revelations of God's dealing with Sinners; Upon the Ungodly God shall rain Snares, Fire and Brimstone, Storm and Tempest; This shall be their Portion to drink. Great Plagues belong to the Ungodly. Death and Bloodshed, Strife and Sword, Calamities, Famine, Tribulation and the Scourge; These Things are created for the Wicked, Sinners shall be turned into Hell, and all the People that forget God.

Psal. 11.

32.

Ecc. 11. 9.

10.

Psal. 10.

Rom. 2. 8,

9.



to them that do not obey the Truth, but obey Unrighteousness; Indignation and Wrath, Tribulation and Anguish, upon every Soul of Man that doth Evil. These, and infinite other denunciations of Vengeance may give us a Notion of the Sinners deplorable Circumstances, and the unspeakable Hatred of God against him, while he persists in his ungodly Courses. From all which Considerations we cannot but infer with the Wise Man, that *he that sinneth is an Enemy to his own Soul*; and that since such are of the Devil, their Portion will not fail to be in Misery, with those Devils and Damned Spirits, which they take such perverse Delight to resemble, in their Works and Dispositions, during this present Life.

Psal. 58.

And is not all this sufficient to beget in us a due Detestation of Sin, and make us afraid ever to commit it? Will not these Threatnings shake the stoutest Heart? What desperate obstinacy is this, to go on in the Way of Destruction, without Remorse, or Scruple, or Consideration where such Practices will end? And yet we find too many, such as *David* describes, who, *like the deaf Adder stop their Ears, and refuse to hear the Voice of the Chärmer, charm he never so wisely*; Men, upon whom no Methods used for their Amendment make any Impression at all. The inward Motions of God's Spirit they stifle and suppress, the Remorse of their own Consciences they silence, the Threatnings of Punishment they despise, the Admonitions and Examples of Good Men they regard not, and the Exemplary Vengeance upon others they take no warning by: And yet the Misery they draw upon their own Heads by this way of living is so great, that, were Matters rightly considered

sidered, a Man would not commit one wilful Sin, to gain Ten Thousand Worlds. For what can be a tolerable compensation for the forfeiture of that Grace, by which alone we are enabled to do or think any Thing that is Good? What can repair the Loss of God's Love, and Protection, and fatherly Care, by this Means turned in to profest Enmity? What amends can be made us for that Inheritance of a Glorious and Eternal Kingdom in Heaven, to which by deliberately offending our Father there, we cut off all Title and Claim? What sensual Pleasure is to be compared to that inward Peace, and sweet Consolation, with which a good Conscience cheers the Spirits of the Just? What madness is it to enslave our selves to our Mortal Enemy, to make that Soul, which was once the Temple of the Holy Ghost, a Den of Dragons, a Dungeon of Devils, a Sink of Filth and Noisome Abominations, and for ever a Companion of the Damned in exquisite Torments? *Lastly*, Who in his Senses would abandon the Saviour that dyed for him, renounce all Interest in those Sufferings, which alone can make him Happy, trample under Foot the precious Blood of the Son of God, and, as much as in him lies Crucifie afresh, and persecute his Redeemer? And yet This is the Guilt, this the Misery, of all backsliding Christians, of whom St. Peter <sup>2Pet. 2.21.</sup> truly says, *That it had been better for such not to have known the Way of Righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the Holy Commandment delivered unto them.*

Let wanton Worldlings then solace themselves never so much in their Vanities, and soften their Wicked Actions by trifling Excuses: Let them call their Pride, Good Breeding;

Heb. 10.  
28, 29.

2 Pet. 2.  
4, 5, 6, 9.

their Intemperance, Good Fellowship; their Anger and Revenge, Honour and Courage; their Lasciviousness, obeying Nature; yet shall they one day to their Sorrow find, how thin a Shelter all these Pretences are: They shall be made sensible to their Cost, that God is not to be Jested with; and all their Drolleries upon Him and Religion, which now make them wicked Diversion, shall then be recanted too late, and severely accounted for. They will then wish in vain, that those Warnings of the Apostle, had found an early Passage to their Hearts; *He that despised Moses's Law dyed without Mercy; of how much sorer Punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden underfoot the Son of God, and counted the Blood of the Covenant, wherewith he was Sanctified an unholy Thing, and hath done Despite unto the Spirit of Grace?* And again, *If God spared not the Angels that sinned, but cast them down to Hell, and delivered them into Chains of Darknes, to be reserved unto Judgment; And spared not the old World, but brought in a Flood upon the World of the Ungodly; And turned the Cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into Ashes, condemning them with an Overthrow, making them an Ensamble to those that after should live Ungodly; The Lord knoweth how to reserve the Unjust unto the day of Judgment to be Punished.* And this indeed is the proper Way of Reasoning: For, Why should not every Man draw these Consequences to himself? If the Angels, Creatures of so much more Excellence and Power than Man, if Adam in Paradise, if all the other Instances we read of, paid so dear for some single Sin, what am I to expect, who have been guilty of so many? If God hath born longer with Me, than with some others,

what

what a sad Account have I to make, if his long suffering do not lead me to Repentance? If *David* and other Holy Persons afflicted themselves so sore, for Forgiveness of their Sins, what Punishment will remain for me, if my Sins so grievous, so numerous, be not forgiven? If our Lord hath told us true, that the way to Heaven is strait, and the Gate that leads to Life narrow; and that Men shall give Account for every idle Word, What shall become of Me if I take my Ease, and pursue the Pleasures of Sense, and am so far from observing my Words, that I seldom enquire into my Actions? If the Righteous be saved with Difficulty, where shall I appear, or how shall I be able to stand in that dreadful Day, who am so miserably Worldly and Wicked?

These sorts of Expostulation would prove of mighty Benefit, if we would Argue our selves by them into a just Dread of God's severe Judgments, and not flatter or deceive our own Souls. For want of these it is chiefly, that the blackest and most enormous Vices are indulged. Men have not God before their Eyes, and therefore they cherish themselves in Wickedness. And the Virtue of *David* is by himself ascribed to this, that *All God's Judgments were constantly before him, and therefore he kept the Ways of the Lord, and did not depart from his God, as the Wicked do.* No wonder then, if the Fear of God, which produces such excellent Effects, be termed the beginning of Religious Wisdom; No wonder if the Prophet beg of God throughly to possess his Heart with this Principle, the most powerful Check to all Evil, and the fruitful Source of all Holy Dispositions. *St. Paul*, after declaring to the *Corinthians*, That we must  
Psal. 18.  
21, 22.  
Psal. 111.  
2 Cor. 5.  
all 10, 11.

all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ, there to receive according to the Things done in our Body, proceeds, Knowing therefore the Terror of the Lord, we persuade Men. And St. Peter, after describing the Holiness and Majesty of God advi-

**1 Pet. 1. 17.** ses thus, *If ye call upon the Father, who without respect of Persons judgeth according to every Man's Work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear. A necessary Admonition, no doubt, to all, but especially to those who by their sinful Practices, have provoked the Divine Displeasure, and rendred themselves obnoxious to the severity of his Justice. For if once they fall finally, or die in that State, there remains no more Remedy for their Sin and Misery. And what Wise Man then would not fear exceedingly? Who would suffer himself to Eat, and Drink, and be Merry, till he had discharged his Soul of that heavy Burden, and made Peace between God and his Conscience? How dangerous is his Condition till this be done? How many Ways may he fall into the Hands of that God, who is a consuming Fire? A Tile from a House, as he walks the Streets; A Slip of a Horse, as he travels upon the Road; the Assault of an Enemy, or a Robber that he thinks not of; a Cold, or a Surfeit, or any other Distemper; Any one Accident of a Million that may befall him, may bereave him of this Life, and hurry him in a Moment into everlasting Flames. And is not this then a State to be dreaded? Is not this a Danger that requires our utmost Care to prevent? Most true certainly is that of the Wiseman,*

**Heb. 12.** *Happy is the Man that feareth alway, but he that hardeneth his Heart shall fall into Mischiefe.*

**29.**

**Prov. 28.** *Happy is the Man that feareth alway, but he that hardeneth his Heart shall fall into Mischiefe.*

**14.**

“Lord, of thy Mercy, Grant us Grace, to  
“fear thee as we ought; and so to consider thy  
“Justice

"Justice and Judgments, that we may answer  
 "the End of all thy Threatnings. That so we  
 "may avoid Sin, and not delay our Repentance,  
 "but set about thy Service, whilst thou art con-  
 "tent to accept us. Pardon, O Lord, our past  
 "Offences, and strengthen our Resolutions of  
 "better Obedience for the time to come : that  
 "we may not put off this necessary Work,  
 "till the door be shut against us ; nor suffer those  
 "precious opportunities to slip through our  
 "Hands ; which when once lost, can never be  
 "retriev'd. O help us to see, and seriously to  
 "consider the things that belong to our peace,  
 "before Thou, provoked by our wicked De-  
 "lays, give us up to a Spirit of Delusion and  
 "Impenitence, and hide them eternally from  
 "our Eyes.

## CH A P. IX.

*Some other Aggravations of Sin, parti-  
 cularly the Majesty of God, and the  
 Benefits we receive from Him.*

T Hough the much greater part of Christians  
 do not, it is to be feared, arrive at Da-  
 vid's Perfection of placing all their delight in  
 God's Commandments, (which yet would be the  
 certain effect of a virtuous Life, and a good Con-  
 science) yet is it fit that all should make that  
 Confession at least, *Righteous art Thou, O Lord, Psal. 119.*  
*and just are thy Judgments.* For which reason I  
 shall enlarge a little more upon the Greatness of  
 our Offence, in sinning against our God ; and  
 vindic-

vindicate his Justice, in avenging it, so terribly (as you have heard) when we do so.

It hath been already observed, That every Crime is more grievous, as the Person injured by it is greater, and the Party transgressing is more mean and vile. To which purpose we find the Laws of God ushered in by such Prefaces

Gen. 17. as these: *I am the Almighty God, walk before me, and be thou perfect. Heaven is my Throne, and*

Isa. 66. *Earth is my Foot-stool. And again, Be not stiff-*

Deut. 10. *necked, for the Lord your God is God of Gods, and Lord of Lords; a Great God, a Mighty, and a Terrible, who regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward. Consider then what an infinite Majesty, Thou, poor Worm of the Earth, hast so often and so contemptuously offended, and tremble at thy Presumption. We see none so bold, as openly to affront an Earthly Prince, at least in his own presence. But what are all the Princes of the Earth to the thousandth part of God's incomprehensible Majesty; who with one word made Heaven and Earth, and every Creature; and can with the same Ease destroy and command all these back into nothing again. Whose Beck the Powers of Heaven and Earth obey, and at whose frown the very Pillars that sustain this vast Frame, shake and tremble. The Sinner is the only Creature that dares to harden himself in opposition to this Universal Monarch; and every time he commits a wilfull Sin, he does defy this Glorious Majesty, and withstand him to the Face. A Majesty so transcendently great, that no mortal Eye can see him; before whom Hell is naked, and the Power of whose thunder none can understand.*

Job. 26.

Imagin then this King sitting on his Throne, clothed with Light inaccessible, and encompass'd with

with millions of Angels, and Chariots of flaming Fire. Imagine, that thou seest all Creatures trembling at his presence, and most obsequiously attending to the respective Offices assigned them to discharge. Imagin again, that thou seest all these entirely depending upon his Pleasure, acting and subsisting only by that Virtue, which streams out perpetually from this Fountain of all Life and Power; this glorious and resplendent Sun, whose Beams warm the greatest Angel, and the least Spire of Grass, the highest and the lowest Beings, into Existence and Activity; and think, thou seest all these drooping, dying, vanishing into nothing, if He, but for one moment think fit to withdraw his enlivening and sustaining Influence. This will give thee some, but even all this will not give thee a worthy and adequate Idea of the Divine Majesty; of the Universal Homage and dread paid to him, to which the presumptuous Sinner is the only exception upon Earth. But yet This may suffice to abate thy wonder at the Severe Vengeance reserved for this unexampled Rebel. For how unaccountably do we deal with that Terrible Majesty, when the Awe of Him will not restrain us, so much as the presence of the meanest of our Brethren upon Earth: When we are afraid of a Man that shall die, and the Son of Man who shall be made as grass, and forget the Lord our Maker? This is such an Absurdity in Behaviour, as strikes at the very Root of all Religion, and accordingly is by God himself charg'd upon the Jews, as a plain Evidence of their Unbelief. For so the Prophet is order'd to reprove them: *Hear now this, O foolish People and without understanding, which have Eyes and see not, which have Ears and hear not; Fear ye not me? saith the Lord,*

Jer. 5. 21,



Pfal. 14.  
53.

Lord, will ye not tremble at my presence, which have placed the Sand for a bound of the Sea, by a perpetual Decree, that it cannot pass it; and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it: But this People hath a faithless and rebellious Heart. And David assigns this, as the reason why foolish Men were become corrupt and abominable in their wickedness, that they said in their Hearts, There is no God. So that, thus far at least, this horrid depravation of Manners and Security in sinning, proceeds from want of Faith, that such Men do not consider God as he is. For had they lively and vigorous Idea's of that Holy, that Powerful, that Terrible Majesty, which the Scriptures describe him to be, they could not possibly break loose from the restraints of these Impressions, but must of necessity fear to offend and provoke Him.

## SECT. II.

### *Of the Benefits we receive from Almighty God.*

THIS Consideration, added to the Former, will be an exceeding Aggravation of our Wickedness. To injure them that do us Good, is so detestable, so monstrously unnatural, that that the very fiercest of Brutes are won by Kindness; and much more do reasonable Creatures find themselves Charmed by it; especially if it come from Great Persons, the Honour and Advantage of whose Favour renders Gifts, otherwise very small, infinitely obliging to the Receivers. And therefore every Christian, upon this occasion will do well to reflect, what he hath received at the Bountiful Hands of the Great

Great God. All which was given, with a Design of engaging Men to live, and serve him faithfully. And, though no Tongue can express the half of those Gifts we have all received, nor estimate them according to their just Value; nor conceive the greatness of the Love that bestowed them; yet for the refreshment of my Reader's Memory, and exciting him the more effectually to Gratitude, I will just name some general Topicks, taken from the principal and most visible Instances of God's Goodness, to which the rest may be referred as they occur to each Person's Remembrance.

*First* then, Consider the Benefit of thy Creation: That God framed thee out of Nothing, into the likeness of himself; that he intended thee for the noblest Purpose, to serve him in this, and to reign with him in the next Life: And that, for the attainment of these glorious Ends, he hath made his other Creatures thy Subjects and Servants. If this Reflection affect thee but coldly, quicken it with an Imagination, that any one part of thy Body, or any one of thy Senses were wanting: What Notion wouldst thou have of thy Friend's Kindness, if he could help thee to a Leg, or an Arm, or an Eye? How wouldst thou esteem thy self, beholding to One, who restored thy Hearing, when Deaf; thy Speech, when Dumb; thy Sight, when Blind. And if the giving any one of these must needs be taken for an Eternal Obligation, learn from hence to value the miraculous Bounty of that Maker and Preserver, who hath bestowed, and for so many Years together continued all these several Parts and Powers; and the many more, of which thou art compounded, in their Free use and full Perfection.

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Consider again, that he hath made thee in the resemblance of no less an Excellence than himself; that the Service he requires from thee at present, is both Honourable and Advantageous; and that the Crown laid up for those who serve him faithfully, shall last to all Eternity: And what is Earth and Ashes, that this should be admitted to reign with God in Glory? Who can conceive the boundless Ocean of that Love, which makes us capable of such vast Advantages, and hath prepared for us the utmost Happiness we are capable of? Consider once more, what a Magnificent World is contrived for thy Use and Service; the Heavens give thee Light, the Earth, and Air, and Water furnish unspeakable variety of Creatures, for thy Sustenance and Delight; Thus hath he furnished thy Dwelling Richly, and all, to assist thee in his Service, or to render that Service pleasant and easie, by their Comforts. And now I appeal to thy own Conscience, whether it be not most unpardonable Ingratitude, to abuse the Kindness which hath bestowed so numerous, so noble Gifts upon thee; and what can be too bad for those, who make these very Creatures Instruments of Injury and Dishonour to their and our common Master and Maker, which his Liberality gave on purpose, to encourage Men in his Service, and for promoting his own Glory?

2. But happier were it for us never to have been Created, if this Good God had not added the Second and better Benefit of our Redemption. For by this, we regain all those former Advantages, which Sin had forfeited and lost; We are saved from that Eternal Destruction, to which that had made us liable; our Faults are expiated by the most astonishing Satisfaction

atisfaction of the Blood of God, and our Redemption, paid by his bitter and opprobrious Death upon the Cross. Blessed Jesus! who can worthily comprehend this inestimable Goodness, this most amazing Condescension! Suppose then, Christian Reader, that a poor Slave had, in combination with some of the chief Nobility, committed horrible Crimes against his Prince; but he had repeated those Crimes often, they offended but once. When these Offenders were all convicted, and ready to suffer for their Faults, suppose this mighty King delivering up his Nobles to Justice, but disposed to Save and Pardon that despicable Slave; Nay, to do Honour to his Laws, laying all the Penalty, the Shame, the Torments, due to this Wretch upon his only Son, and the Heir of all his Kingdoms. What sort of Resentment must such a strange extending of Mercy create? But if that Son, refusing to intercede for those Peers, should, not only accept most chearfully, but earnestly entreat, that all the Disgrace and Punishment due to this wretched Slave, might be laid upon himself; should voluntarily die to atone for his Offences, nay, to exalt him to a Part in his own Honour, to make him *Heir* to his Father, and *Co-heir* with himself, is it possible, were this thy own Case, to conceive, how thou wouldst love and serve such a Benefactor ever after? Could any thing, after this unspeakable Grace, tempt thee willingly to displease so kind a Lord? And yet this is thy Case; nay it is infinitely less engaging than thine. Thy Redemption is a greater Mercy than any temporal Deliverance; the Kindness and Condescension of the Son of God infinitely greater, than that of the greatest Emperour upon Earth could possibly

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possibly be; yet is this forgotten, yet is this by many thought not worth remembring; yet this Saviour injured and offended daily. So easy is the Application to our selves; so monstrous is the Ingratitude of every Sinner.

3. Let us, in the next Place, lay to Heart the mighty Benefit of our Christian *Vocation*, by which I mean that infinite Mercy of God, whereby we are called out of the Darknes of Ignorance and Infidelity, to the Knowledge and Light of the Gospel; Which makes us actual Partakers, and conveys to us a full right to the Advantages of this Redemption. Now the Case with Infidels is far otherwise; for, though Christ have paid down a Ransom for all Mankind in general, yet are not all within the ordinary Conditions of obtaining it; but such only as it best pleases his Divine Goodness to instruct in his Gospel, and make the Means on Man's Part knowable and practicable to them.

4. After which Mercy of calling Men to the Truth, Upon their Sincere Acceptance and Obedience, there follows another Instance of the Divine Goodness, which is the *Justification* of Believers. By this they are released from the Guilt and Penalty of all their past Sins: they are strengthen'd and enriched with Accessions of Divine Grace; they grow in all Virtues necessary for their Practice; they are grounded in Faith, and Hope, and Charity; made Righteous in God's Sight, and entitled to his Heavenly Kingdom. So that, if a Man look at his own Private Advantage, this is more desirable than even the two former Mercies. For, what would it profit us to be Created and Redeemed, if we be not called and admitted to Partake of that Redemption? Or, what would  
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the Knowledge and Capacity of this Salvation avail, if God's free Mercy and Grace did not justify and adopt us for his own? So that these are the Completion of the former, because they finish the Work begun in them, and bring the Matter home to our own actual and particular Advantage.

5. There are, besides these, infinite other most valuable Privileges, peculiar to the true Friends and Children of God: Among which we must not fail to reckon the blessed Sacraments of our Religion; Left by our Blessed Lord for our mighty Benefit and Comfort, the one to let us in, the other to preserve and sustain us when we are incorporated in to his Church. These are the sure Pledges of his Love, the lively Signs and Memorials of his Death, the sacred Pipes, through which God infuses his Grace into our Souls. The first cleanses us from Sin, and knits us to Christ, as Members of his Mystical Body, washed in the Water of Regeneration, and made meet by this new Birth for the Kingdom of God. The other conveys to us the most precious Food of his own Flesh and Blood, remission of our Sins after Baptism, and all other Benefits of his Passion. This strengthens and sustains us, repairs our Spiritual Decays, and fills us with Joy and Peace in believing, and unites us in the strictest ties of Friendship, and Union, and Christian Charity. These are Jewels of so great Price, Means of such singular Efficacy, that the Worldly and Carnal cannot understand them; but, they, whose Knowledge and Experience hath thus far enlightned them, think no Treasures upon Earth comparable to them. And those wretched People, who, through Neglect, or for any

Temporal Consideration, deprive their Souls of these unspeakable Advantages, are greatly to be Blamed, greatly to be Pitied ; for this Loss, if not repaired in time, will be everlasting and irrecoverable.

6. Let us reflect yet farther, what infinite Dangers the Good Providence of God hath preserved us from, which others have fallen into ; and which, if not plucked back by his Hand, we were rushing into our selves. The Spiritual Dangers, I mean, and those Snares of eternal Damnation, which nothing, but his protection and preventing Grace, could ever have defeated. Or, if we have been overtaken and fallen foully, yet hath he not suffered us to be surpris'd with Death and Judgment, nor snatch'd us away in the midst of our Sins, which hath been the Case of many Thousands now in endless Torments, and such as we can give our selves no Account, why our Souls should be more precious in the sight of God, than theirs. To this we may add all the secret Motions and Methods of inciting us to do well ; whereby God hath either knocked inwardly at the Door of our Hearts, by inspiring good Desires ; or warned us outwardly, by the Means and Ministry of others ; such as Good Sermons, Good Books, the Advice of our Friends, the Reproaches of our Enemies, the Virtuous Examples of the Godly, and the terrible Afflictions and sad Ends of the Profligate and Wicked. All which are of use, and were intended for the Advantage of our Souls, to draw us to a Love of himself, to engage us irrevocably in his Service, to beget in us a due detestation of Vice, an to exalt us at last to his Holy and Heavenly Kingdom.

Besides these the many temporal Blessings of Health, Friends, Reputation, competent Provision, or the like, which every Man's own Circumstances make peculiar to himself, we shall do well to recollect as we can. And though the Summ be infinite, yet these Benefits do not more require a grateful return upon the Account of their Number, than they do with regard, to their inestimable Value considered in themselves; to the boundless Love and Liberality of the Giver, and the vileness of the Receiver in comparison to his Glorious Majesty. These ought all to excite in us vehement Affections and Desires to appear sensible, how much we owe to this Benefactor; by serving him unfeignedly, and preferring his Favour before all worldly Considerations whatsoever. But, if we cannot bring our selves thus far neither, yet the least we can possibly do, is to resolve that we will not any more affront and do despight, by the insolence of a wicked Life, to Him, who hath thus manifested to us the Riches of his Goodness, and loved us with so beneficial, so wonderful a Love. The lowdest Lord upon Earth, if he gave one of his Cottagers a Farm of Five or Ten Pounds Yearly Rent, would exclaim upon that Tenant for a Beast of a Fellow, if he were not at his Service all his Life after : But, if instead of serving, he should wilfully give him offence; if he should take Part against him, and strike up a most intimate Friendship with his profest Enemy, how would this Man of Honour resent such base Usage? And yet, I must make bold to tell his Lordship, that, as little as he makes of the Matter, his Behaviour is ten thousand times more brutish and base to Almighty God. He hath received from that



hand more than Ten Thousand-fold, above what any one Man can contribute to the Advantage of any other Man. For what hath he indeed, which he hath not received from thence? The Bread he Eats, the Ground he treads on, the Lands he falsely calls his own, the Light he walks and acts by, the Air he draws in; in a Word, all the Comforts and Advantages both of Body and Mind, nay that very Mind it self; and all its noble Faculties, each of which, how miserably soever neglected, is of more Value than Ten thousand Bodies. And a most prodigious Thing it is, that any who write *Man*, and pretend to Reason at all, should not consider, and be sensible of its Worth. No wonder, after all this, if God complain in so pathetical a Manner in Scripture, of this abominable Ingratitude; if he summon all the Creatures together, to behold and stand amazed at it, and upbraid Men with those better Examples, set them by the Beasts themselves. And thus we find him doing in the most moving and affectionate Terms imaginable. *Hear O Heavens, and give Ear, O Earth,* i. e. be astonished at this incredible impiety; *I have nourished and brought up Children, and they have rebelled against me. The Ox knoweth his Owner, and the Ass his Masters Crib; but Israel doth not know, my People doth not consider. Ah! sinful Nation, a People laden with Iniquity, a Seed of Evil-doers, they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the holy one of Israel to anger.*

If then, my Friends, there be any remains of Grace or common Ingenuity in us, let us forbear to offend him, who hath been so unspeakably kind to us; let us cease at last to render Evil for Good, Hatred for Affection, Contempt for  
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this more than Fatherly Care over us. He hath done for us the utmost that even Almighty Power could do: He hath given us as much as our Condition is capable of receiving; nay, he hath imparted to us his very self. He hath still great and inestimable Benefits in reserve for us; even the Treasures and Glory of the Life to come; and all the Requital he expects is only Gratitude and Love. And shall we grudge to make this Poor Return? Shall we think much to do that for our God and Maker, which we count it a Reproach to be behind-hand in to an Equal, a Brother? Nay, which we look upon our selves bound to do for less than the Tenthousandth Part of what we enjoy from that bountiful Giver of all good Gifts? Even an Alms at our Gate is esteemed to deserve Thanks, and none of us would bear a relieved Beggar lying in our Faces; And yet, as Helpless and Poor are we, as truly sustained by relief from above, and much more insolent and insupportable, when offending against that bountiful Author of our Life, and all our Comforts.

But indeed I may add, that though we set aside all those Engagements, God hath infinite other Charms, which ought to attract our Love. For nothing can contribute to recommend any thing to our Affections, which is not in him, in an incomparably higher Degree. Were all the Excellences of Heaven and Earth united in one, the Beauty, the Wisdom, the Virtue, the Greatness, the Goodness, the Usefulness and Advantage of every Creature, yet still that Lord and Saviour, whom the Sinner treats with Contempt, is infinitely more to be valued and admired. For he does not as they do, partake only of all these Perfections, but is the

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very Things in the Abstract; Beauty, and Wisdom, and Greatness, and Goodness, and Happiness it self; the Source of all these; and what Degrees of them soever other Things attain to, they are only such Measures of Excellence, as this inexhaustible Fountain of Goodness fit in his Wisdom to impart to each of them.

Psalm. 25.  
10.

Blush then, ungrateful insensible Wretch, at thy unworthy Behaviour, to so Great, so Good, so Bountiful a Lord, and resolve from this Instant to change thy Course of Life, and make some suitable Amends for thy former unseemly Deportment toward him. Come before his Presence with confusion of Face, and beseech him with the Prophet, *To be merciful to thy Sin, for it is exceeding great.* Understand at last how great an Enemy thou hast been to thy self; that without his Mercy thou canst not subsist; and that there is no such fatal Bar to that Mercy, as Ingratitude for Favours formerly vouchsafed thee. If this have proceeded from Ignorance, learn thy Duty, and the dependance of thy Condition; If from Thoughtlessness, apply thy self seriously to consider what wonderful Things thy Lord hath done for thee, and what Account, what Improvement he will expect from them. And, since to all his other Mercies God hath been pleased to add this one more, of making thee sensible of thy past Errour, and allowing thee Time and Opportunity for correcting it: Follow the Directions of this Heavenly Grace, and shew thy self a better and more obedient Child for the time to come. Say within thy own Breast, ‘ I am vanquished, O my God, ‘ at length with the sight of thy astonishing Love; ‘ and hope I shall never have the Heart to dis-  
‘ please

‘please thee any more : Thee, my only, my  
‘best Friend ; who hast prevented me with the  
‘Blessings of Goodness, and so much exceeded  
‘my Requests and largest Wishes. O ! that  
‘these Hands of mine, when they attempt any  
‘Wicked Thing, may always be restrained by  
‘the powerful Image of those Divine Hands,  
‘which for my sake were Nailed to the Cross !  
‘O that my Heart, when disposed to any cor-  
‘rupt Inclination, may be softened by the view  
‘of that Heart, full of Tendernefs and Mercy,  
‘which was pierced to yield streams of Blood  
‘for washing my polluted Soul. It is too much,  
‘my dearest Jesus, that I have neglected the  
‘Force of these moving Arguments heretofore,  
‘and I am heartily sorry and ashamed to have  
‘lived so little to him, who was content to die  
‘for me. But by thy gracious Assistance I hope  
‘to relapse into my former Folly and Ingrati-  
‘tude no more ; and do beg, that thy Love may  
‘for ever hereafter commit a holy Violence up-  
‘on my Soul, and constrain me to a thankful  
‘Obedience. To which Resolutions, frail alas !  
‘and fickle in themselves, I beg that thou wilt  
‘add Strength and Stedfastness, and from thy  
‘Throne in Heaven say, *Amen.*

## C H A P. X.

*Of the time of our Death: And the different Notions we shall then have of the Matters relating to our Souls.*

THE Scriptures frequently observe, and our own daily Experience abundantly proves, that, while Men are in Health and Vigour, the Pleasures and Business, and Enjoyments of this World take fast hold of their Minds, and defeat all the Arguments possible to be urged, for their Care and Concern about Death and a future State. And too often it happens, that all the Evidence of Reason and Religion, all the Threatnings and Warnings of the Book of God, have little or no Effect, for the bringing Men off from a settled Course of Vice, and their most fatal security in Sinning. *Sodom and Gomorrah, Pharaoh and his Egyptians, the Traitor Judas and some others stand upon Record, as lasting Monuments of inflexible Obstinacy; Such as no Methods of Gentleness can win, no Exhortation persuade, no Threatnings or Judgments affright into a Change of their wicked and desperate Resolutions. The Prophets especially are full of Complaints, concerning the inefficacy of their Preaching, and the impenetrable Hardness of their People's Hearts; I will at present only mention one passage of Zechariah, by which we may make some Judgment of the rest. They refused to Harken, and pulled away the Shoulder, and stopped their Ears, that they should not hear; Yea, they made their Hearts as an Adamant-stone, lest they should hear the Law, and the Words which the*  
*Lord*

*Zech. 7.  
11, 12.*

Lord of Hosts hath sent in his Spirit by the former Prophets; therefore came a great Wrath from the Lord of Hosts. Now the same dismal Consequence, which pursued the Jew's Disobedience then, will not fail to overtake every obdurate Sinner, who makes it a point of Bravery, to hold out against all the Methods designed for his Amendment. If they will allow no Place to serious Thoughts, while Health and Prosperity last; there will shortly come a Day, in which God will be heard and known, whether they will or not; Even then, when he begins to execute his Justice: And that he manifestly does, at the time of such persons Death; which puts an end to the season of Trial and Forbearance, and turns them over to that Judgment, upon which the whole of their Eternal Concern depends.

This then is properly God's Day, a Day full of Terrour, and Sorrow, and sore Distress, to the Wicked; wherein the Righteousness of our Judge shall disclose it self, and every Man shall be recompenced according to his Deeds. Then it is, that *he cuts off the Spirit of Princes, and is terrible among the Kings of the Earth.* A Day, that will work a mighty Change in all other Points; when Mirth shall be turned into Weeping, Pleasure into Pains; Sturdiness into Fear, Pride into Despair; but in no Respect will the Alteration be greater, than in the Sense and Opinion of Men's Minds.

The Wisdom of God, which is now so disparaged, and *run down for Folly by the Wise of this World*, will then appear in her Native Beauty and full Lustre; and by her greatest Enemies and Despisers, be acknowledged the True, the only Wisdom: And all the pretended Wisdom  
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Wisd. 5, 4,  
5, 6, 7, 8, 9.

of Carnal and Worldly Men shall then, too late, be confessed no better than Folly and Madness. A lively Image of this strange Reverse of Opinions, is left us by the Wiseman, in the Person of such, as at last discover their Errour; in deriding suffering and oppressed Virtue, and measuring their own Happines by their present Temporal Prosperity. *We Fools accounted his (the Goodman's) Life madness, and his End to be without Honour. But how is he numbered among the Children of God, and his Lot is among the Saints! Therefore have we erred from the Way of Truth; and the Light of Righteousness hath not shined to us, nor the Sun of Righteousness rose upon us. We wearied our selves in the Way of Wickedness and Destruction; yea we have gone through Deserts, where there lay no Way; but as for the Way of the Lord, we have not known it. What hath Pride profited us? Or what Good hath Riches with our Vaunting brought us? For all those Things are pass'd away like a Shadow, and as a Post that hasteth by, &c.*

Observe here how different these Men are become, from the Persons they had been heretofore: How on a sudden the Scene is changed; how they confess their Errour, lament their Folly, complain of Labour lost, and Repentance too late to profit them. O! that the Children of this Generation would lay these Things seriously to Heart, before this fruitless Sorrow overtake them. How does this Description set in a clear Light the wretched state of Sensual and Worldly-minded Men, that beat their Brains, and break their Rest, and waste their Strength in a toilsom Pursuit of Trifle and Nothing; which yet they are at more Pains to compass, than would suffice a Good Man for the attaining Heaven and everlasting Bliss?

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This Man's Labours follow and stick by him for ever: But see the difference; Theirs Deceive and Reproach them at the Last; and, when they are driven to the Brink of the Grave, when they are wearied and quite worn out, with restless Bustle, and hard Drudgery, they find all their Pains employed to no Purpose, and the only Account they turn to, is Anguish and Vexation, and a self-upbraiding Conscience. The Delights they so eagerly pursued, are fled and gone; The little Drofs of Wealth they had raked up together, will do them no manner of Service in their Extremity; Nay 'tis well, if these Things do not add Weight to their other Afflictions. Which yet, in Wicked Men, are at that time so various, so heavy, so insupportable, that none but he that feels them, can have any proportionable Idea of them: Yet because some distant Conjectures may be made, enough to warn us to avoid them, though not enough to display all their Horror; I shall mention Two or Three of the most obvious, and leave my Reader to improve those to his own Spiritual Advantage.

*First* then, We may consider that excess of Pain, without which these Souls and Bodies of ours are not ordinarily separated. For these old Friends, whom long Conversation, and a tender fellow-feeling of each others Joys and Griefs, have mightily endeared, are never prevailed to part, till forced to it by the utmost Violence. And how raging, how intolerable do we imagin that Pain must needs be, which drives the Soul out by degrees; and beats it, like a Besieged Commander, from one Entrenchment to another, till at last there be no Retreat, no Quarter to be had? And what Condition shall



shall we suppose that Soul in, what Anxiety and Confusion when her Strong-holds are broken down, and all her Friends forsake her? When Youth and Activity, Courage and Strength, Dyet and Physick, and all Humane Helps are now no more; but Night and Day the Batteries are playing, and no Cessation to be obtained till the goodly Fabrick be reduced to Ashes.

Can it surprise us that such Circumstances should shake the stoutest Man, and Disarm him of all his former Gaiety and Confidence? that People then should put on other Thoughts; and after a Life negligently spent, reflect with Amazement upon what is passed, while the Power of Reflection continues? But even that is oftentimes utterly lost, by extremity of Pain, and that oppression of the Mind, which makes St. *Augustine's* Advice highly necessary; and, well is it for my Reader, if he be perswaded to follow it.

Serm. 48.  
ad Frat.  
En irom.

'When your last Sickneſs assaults you, alas!  
'how difficult a Thing will it be (ſays he) to  
'repent of the Evil you have done, and the  
'Good you have left undone? For then your Mind  
'will be drawn another Way, and the whole  
'Bent of it will naturally make to that Part,  
'where the anguiſh of your Pain lies. There  
'are many Obſtructions, which will defeat your  
'Deſigns at that Melancholy time. The Suffer-  
'ings of the Body, the fear of Death, the  
'ſight of your Children, the Tears of the Wife,  
'the flattering Comforts of Friends, the diſ-  
'ſembled Hopes of Phyſicians, the Temptati-  
'ons of the Devil. And be aſſured, O Man,  
'that the Impediments I here give thee warn-  
'ing of, thou wilt in thy own Perſon ſhortly  
'Experience. And therefore I conjure thee,  
'deſer not thy Repentance till this laſt day. But,

ſet

'set thy House in order, and make thy Will in  
'time of Health ; whilst thou hast Leisure to  
'think, while thou art thine own Man ; for now  
'thou goest whither thou wilt, but then thou  
'shalt be bound Hand and Foot, and carried  
'whither thou wouldst not.

2. A Second Consideration, which renders Death exceeding terrible to Worldly and Wicked Men, is the sudden and eternal parting from all, that in this Life were esteemed most valuable and dear to them : Their Estates, and Honours, and Preferments ; stately Houses, gay Cloths, rich Jewels ; their Relations, Friends and Acquaintance, in a word, all those Conveniences and Delights, the Enjoyment whereof made them think themselves happy Men. And now, To be torn from all these roughly and all on the suddain, to take an everlasting Farewel, without Hope or possibility of seeing them any more ( and that perhaps at a time too when the Man was under no Apprehensions at all of so fatal a Blow ) must needs be a very sensible Calamity. The Son of Sirach's Observation upon this Case is well weighed ; *O Death how bitter is the Remembrance of thee to a Man that liveth at Rest in his Possessions ; unto the Man that hath nothing to vex him, and that hath Prosperity in all Things !* O dreadful Sentence to the Worldly and Gay, the Voluptuous and Secure, who dreams of nothing but full Stores, and long Life, and continued Happiness, when a Voice shall alarm him, like that in the Gospel, *Thou Fool ! this Night shall thy Soul be required of thee ; then whose shall these things be, which thou hast provided.* And yet so deplorable, our Lord tells us, is the State of every one, who layeth up Treasures for himself, and is not Rich towards God.

Ecclus. 41.  
1.

Luk. 12  
20, 21.

It is not possible for mine, or any mortal Tongue, to express the Terrours of those last Minutes; when such People find, that nothing of all their Labour will avail them any longer: when the very Things in which before they vainly placed their Confidence, now only serve to awaken many afflicting Remembrances in their Mind; when they must not only leave these behind, but go themselves to give an Account, how they were got, and how they have been used: when others shall enjoy the Fruit of that Care, which now perhaps is exchanged for everlasting Torments. Jesus defend us! what a parting must this be! what shall we say or do, if our Pomp, our Wealth, our Honour, and Applause, come to so sad an End! What is the Man now the better, for having lived in Luxury and Pleasure with his Companions, in favour with Princes, or in credit with the World; since, at this fatal Instant, all that Jollity is damped, all his Pride brought down to the Ground, all his former Felicity come to a Period, and as if, nay much worse than if, it had never been at all?

3. There is yet a *Third* Aggravation to the Misery of this day more uncomfortable than either of those already mentioned, and that is the Consideration of what will become of such a Man, both in respect of his Body and his Soul. For the former, it must needs be a very mortifying Reflection, that the only Inheritance left for this, *Is creeping Things, and Beasts, and Worms*, that this Body, formerly Fed and Cloathed with so much niceness and delicacy; that object of Vanity and Pride, thought too good for any of the Discipline or Austerities of Religion, must now be abandoned of it's best Friends, be-  
come

Ecclesi 10.  
2.

come a common Nuisance, and fatted up for a Prey to Rottenness and Vermin. When the Prophet's threatening shall be fulfilled in the most literal Sense of the Words; *The bravery of Ornaments taken away, and in stead of sweet smell* <sup>Isa. 3. 18,</sup> *there shall be a stink; and instead of a Girdle, a Rent; and instead of a wessel Hair, Baldness; and Burning instead of Beauty.* <sup>24.</sup>

And yet all this is nothing, in comparison of the Horrors and dreadful Apprehensions how the Soul shall be disposed of, at its departure out of this Body. The Thoughts, that she is now hurrying away to the Judgment Seat of Almighty God, there to receive a Sentence of everlasting Concern. And, when this comes to be yet more particularly consider'd, by comparing the Threatenings of God, with his own past Life; then the Danger puts on a dreadful Face indeed: When he begins to examin his own Conscience, and finds the infinite Offences, which this is ready to testify against him, at his Appearance before that Court of Justice: When his Sins stare him in the Face, and all the Woes denounced against them come fresh into his memory: When the Tempter, who industriously kept these Things out of his Thoughts before, to detain him in Vice; shall urge and amplify them all to drive him to despair; shall now not this Man (think you) labour under Agonies insupportable at his passage out of the World? and may we not conclude St. *Augustin's* description <sup>Devan. scull.</sup> of the Case to be very just, and his exhortation upon it highly necessary and reasonable? "If you would be satisfied (says he) with what fear and pain Soul and Body part, observe now what I am about to tell you; The Angels at that Hour shall attend, to bring thy

"Soul before the Tribunal of a most dreadful  
 "Judge. Then shall she call to mind her Wicked  
 "Actions, and begin to fear and tremble exceedingly. Most gladly would she make her  
 "escape and leave those Actions behind her;  
 "entreating the Angels to forbear her a while,  
 "and begging the respite, though but of one poor  
 "Hour. But this Request cannot be heard,  
 "and her Wickedness, crying out with one  
 "Voice, shall say, *We are thy Works, and thou*  
 "*hast done us, and We will follow thee whitherso-*  
 "*ever thou goest, even to the very Seat of Judgment.*  
 "This ( my Friends ) is the Condition of a sin-  
 "ful Soul, parting with its Body, in Amaze-  
 "ment and Confusion, and dragged along with  
 "the Load of its Sins. But now, the Good  
 "Man's Soul takes its flight with Comfort and  
 "Joy, the Angels all the while conducting it  
 "with Songs of Triumph. Since then these  
 "Things are so; look forward to the hour of  
 "Death with fear at this Distance, that when  
 "it approaches you may meet it undauntedly.  
 "Consider and take care now, that then you may  
 "enjoy profound Quiet and peaceful Security.

Since then this Remove out of this State of  
 Mortality, is so formidable, so dangerous, and  
 yet so certain and unavoidable; since so many  
 perish in crossing this perilous Gulph; what  
 Man of common Prudence would not make the  
 Hazards and Miseries of others, a Warning to  
 himself? Who shall presume to call himself a  
 Reasonable Creature, that will not look before  
 him, and make some Provision for so important  
 a Change? If thou art a Christian, and dost in  
 good earnest believe the Principles of the Reli-  
 gion thou professest thy self of; I need not tell  
 thee, that no Age or State can exempt thee from

one day making the Experiment in thy own Person, of all I have now set before thee. Let not then Youth, or Health, or Greatness, or Pleasure, or any other Treacherous Delusion tempt thee to look upon what thou hast read, as a Matter, in which thou art little concerned. But be very confident, that Sickness or Age will shortly confine thee to thy Bed; that Death is whetting those Arrows, which all thy strugglings will not be able, either to Conquer, or escape; that this Body of thine, now so tenderly loved, and so vainly indulged, must crumble into Dust, and be devoured by Worms; and that thy Soul must, thou knowest not how soon, be summoned before the Just and Mighty God, there to render an Account for every Action of thy past Life.

## SECT. II.

### *The Application of the former Section.*

**I**T remains now, that we take due Care to apply the two former Considerations to our selves, for our own Advantage and Improvement. Which will best be done, by imagining this to be our own Case; and that we were even now at the very point of Death; forsaken of all our false Confidences, and expecting the next Moment, that stroke which must sever us from them. This would shew us the Vanity of all these Trifles here below, and put us upon the many seasonable Reflections suggested to us in Scripture. Think then that of the Prophet spoken to thee in particular. *Who shall Jer. 15. 3. have pity upon thee? or who shall bemoan thee? or 6. who shall go to ask for thy Peace? Thou shalt forsake*

me, saith the Lord, thou art gone backward; therefore will I stretch out my Hand against thee and destroy thee, I am weary of repenting. What will ye do in the Day of Visitation, and in the Desolation that shall come from far? to whom will ye flee for help? and where will ye leave your Glory? What is threatened to Jerusalem will then be true of every Wicked and Worldly Man, They shall cry unto the Gods to whom they offered Incense, but they shall not save them at all in the time of their Trouble. Their powerful Friends, their agreeable Acquaintance, their Pleasures, and Honours, their Wealth, those Idols which they have set up to themselves in this Life, and served much more, than they did God; shall not be able to afford them the least Comfort or Relief in this their extreme Distress. To this melancholy Condition, will thy Soul, ( my Christian Reader ) very quickly be driven, if thou do not prevent it by timely Wisdom and Diligence. To which purpose the Spirit of God hath left us Two very excellent Rules for our Direction.

The *First* is, A Virtuous and truly Conscientious Life; but particularly that of living profitably in our Generation, doing Good and abounding in Mercy and Charity to the Poor; One Reward of which is expressly declared to be an easy and happy Passage at the hour of Death. Blessed are the Dead which die in the Lord ( says the Voice from Heaven ) for they shall rest from their Labours, and their Works follow them. And David observes this as the particular Priviledge of the charitable Man, That the Lord shall strengthen him when he lyeth upon the Bed of Languishing, and will make all his Bed in his Sickness. A Bed of Languishing it is indeed, and deep Sorrow, such as the broken Powers

Rev. 14.  
13.

of drooping Nature are not sufficient to hold up against: But this Bed shall be made soft and smooth, and all the Pains and restless Tossings of it wonderfully composed, by the inward Support, which the sweet Remembrance of a well spent Life, the Memorial of our Alms before God, and the Cheering Sense of his Favour, shall then minister to the Godly and the Charitable Patient. These are Things that will stick by us, and stand us in stead, when all other Comforts fail and forsake us, They engage the Justice of God on our behalf, and do in some Sense render him our Debtor. For so St. Paul hath most emphatically expressed it, *God* Heb. 6.10, *is not unrighteous, that he should forget your Work and Labour of Love, which ye have shewed toward his Name, in that ye have ministered to the Saints, and do Minister.* i. e. Supply the Necessities of Good People in want. *And we desire that every one of you do shew the same Diligence to the full assurance of Hope unto the End.* That last Clause is interpreted by some of that lively Expectation of future Happiness, which this Virtue inspires Men with, when they come to die. And what could be a more Powerful Inducement to any considering Christian, to abound in these excellent Fruits, while he hath Life and Health, than that these will sustain and buoy him up in the Conflict which he must shortly undergo with this last formidable Enemy; that these will disarm this strong invader of his House; take out the Sting of that Death, which humane Nature is so wretchedly afraid of, and enable him, without confusion or consternation of Mind, to enter the Lifts against the King of Terrors himself?

The Advantages of this single Virtue are indeed represented in Scripture to be so many and



- so great, that to instance in them all would be endless. That passage of our blessed Saviour to the Scribes and Pharisees, is very remarkable,
- Luk. 11. *Give Alms of such Things as ye have, and behold all*  
 41. *Things are clean unto you.* And so is that of  
 Dan. 4. 27. *Daniel to King Nebuchadnezzar, Wherefore O*  
*King, let my Counsel be acceptable unto thee, and*  
*break off thy Sins by Righteousness, and thy Iniqui-*  
*ties by shewing Mercy to the Poor, if it may be a*  
*lengthening of thy Tranquility, or (as the Margin*  
*renders it) a healing of thine Errour.* Which  
 Texts, though they do not by any means import,  
 that Alms, without other Virtues, can render  
 Men acceptable to God, or make any proper  
 Satisfaction for the Offences of a profligate Life,  
 yet ought we to gather from hence, that this is  
 one of those Fruits of Repentance, which of all  
 others, is most likely to recommend us to his  
 Favour and Grace; And thus we see it evident-  
 ly was, in the Case of *Cornelius*, whose Conver-  
 sion to the Truth St. Peter was sent to effect  
 through that Mercy of God, to which this Centu-  
 rion's Prayers and Alms had inclined him. To  
 the same effect is that of the Son of *Sirach*, *Wa-*  
 Ecclus. 3. *ter will quench a burning Fire, and Alms make an*  
 30. *Atonement for Sins:* That Disposition which pro-  
 vokes us to them, is an Argument of our Love  
 of God, when we are liberal to our Poor Bre-  
 thren for his sake. And this Love is the very  
 Principle, by which Men turn from Sin, and  
 obtain his Pardon, as all Sin argues hatred of  
 God and is hateful to him. To all which I  
 shall only need to add that application of the  
 Luk. 16. 9. Parable concerning the unjust Steward, *Make*  
*to your selves therefore Friends of the Mammon of*  
*Unrighteousness, that when ye fail, they may receive*  
*you into everlasting Habitations.* Out of our Stew-  
 ards-  
 arship

ardship Death will certainly put us, and therefore the most provident Thing we can do, is to look out for some way of subsisting, when that time comes; and this our Lord tells us will best be done, by securing an Interest above, by the Good Use and bountiful Distribution of those Goods of our Master, which we have at present in our Hands. But,

2. *Secondly*, Another Method to prevent the Terrours of Death, is frequently to have it in our Thoughts beforehand. It is a Rule in Nature, that all Objects are less apt to disorder us, as we by Custom have rendred them more familiar. And thus, by acquainting our selves with Death by Premeditation, keeping his Ghastly Face before our Eyes, and by conversing with, and by Degrees coming up close to it, we might take off much from the frightfulness of the Object, and come to cure our selves of that Starting and Trembling, which strangeness and surprise chiefly occasion in us. This was *Job's* constant Practice; *All the Days of my Job. 14. appointed time will I wait, till my Change come.* He seems by those Words to have made this Matter his great Study, and continually to be looking out, and observing how much nearer approaches this Change made toward him. And this Example might be, and no doubt is, by many, imitated with wonderful Success. Nothing can be more idle, than that Pretence which vain and careless Men urge against this Practice; that it damps all their Mirth, breeds Melancholy, and takes away all the Enjoyment of Life. For, if *this bitter Cup may not pass* from us, but drink it every one of us must; then sure it is the greatest Prudence to have it much in our Eye, and and to consider how we may do it with Safety and Advantage.

Suppose Men all taking the same Journey to a Place of Happiness and Rest; and a certain River in the Way, not possible to be avoided, upon the passing of which all the Success of their Travels depends; some moving gently into it, others plunging in all on the sudden, but much the greater Part drowned in the crossing; Would not a Wiseman go and stand often upon the Bank, take as diligent View of the Place as he could, observe where the Fords and Shallows, and where the Holes and Whirlpools lie, take notice of those that went before him, what Course they steered, who got well over, and where they mistook their Way, who perished in the Water? For such a weighty, such a necessary Care as this, shall a Man lose himself, for fear of daring to be serious? Are not those Hours much better spent which secure him to his Journeys end, than those, which keep him ignorant and thoughtless of his Danger? In the Case now proposed, I am very confident all the World will agree with me; and yet in that other more hazardous, more important Passage, where People are daily coming, and all must come at one time or other, and where vast Multitudes (God knows) are miserably cast away, we are so stupidly negligent, so foolishly tender of giving our selves any present Uneasiness, that we cannot endure to think of it, nor ever concern our selves about the Matter, till we are drawn down to the very Brink, and must in whether we will or no.

Oh wretched Delusion! Oh deplorable Indulgences! How many Thousands who miscarry everlastingly, might have been saved, and happy for ever; had they but taken the Pains to look before them, and view the Passage well, while

while at some Distance from it? For great and many are the Benefits, which a frequent and serious Meditation of our latter End would bring to us. This shews Man, what he is, how frail and miserable in his own Nature; how fond and vain in all those big Conceits, which Health, and Youth, and Prosperity are apt to blow him up with. All other Glasses are false and counterfeit; but this is sincere and Honest, and flatters none that consult it. And hence it is that we are so often and so earnestly advised to take Measure of our selves from: Because the Meditation of Death is of universal Influence upon our Manners,, and corrects the Temper of our Minds: Particularly we may depend upon it, for these following Good Effects.

1. *First*, It will keep us in a perpetual awe of God and Judgment, and under a provident expectation of dying.

2. *Secondly*, By this means we shall be cured of all that rash unthinking Way of living, too commonly observable: Thus *Job* declares, that the Fear of Death had made him solicitous, and that he doubted his Works; Thus *David* begins a Psalm upon Mortality, with *I said I* Psal. 39.  
*will take heed to my Ways that I offend not*; and *St. Paul* quickens Men up to Charity, and Moderation, by telling them, *They must do Good* Gal. 6.  
*while they have time*; and that because *the Fashion of this World passeth away, and the Time is short,* 1 Cor. 7.  
*therefore they should take Care to use the World, as not abusing it.*

3. A *Third* excellent Effect is the Humbling us by a due Sense of our own Vileness; shewing us how miserably frail and fleeting we are. For what is Man, *whose Life is a Vapour,* and *James 4.*  
 whose

**Pfal. 103.** whose most flourishing Beauty and Glory is but as a Flower of the Field, which as soon as the Wind passeth over, it is blasted and gone, and the Place thereof shall know it no more. He that bears his own Mortality much in Mind, will feel it, work very sensibly upon his Vanity and his Passions, **Ecclef. 10.** and say to himself with the wise Preacher, **Why 9, 10, 18.** is Earth and Ashes proud? When he that is to day a King, to morrow shall die? Pride was not made for Men, nor furious Anger for them that are born of a Woman.

4. A Fourth Advantage will be the Casting off all anxious and unnecessary Cares for the Things of this World, which those Men are generally most addicted to, who least think of leaving it. And this is, not only a Fault like other common Faults, but very often such as God permits People to fall into by way of Punishment for some former Offence. So says **Solomon, Ecclef. 11. 26.** God giveth to a Man that is good in his sight, Wisdom and Knowledge, and Joy; but to the Sinner he giveth Travel, to gather and to heap up.

5. And this by Degrees will advance into a Fifth Good Fruit, which is, of all others, the most commendable and Christian Disposition; That, I mean of despising the Creatures in comparison of the Creatour; weaning our Affections from the World, and setting them entirely upon God; Breathing out with **David, Psal. 73.** Whom have I in Heaven but thee? and there is nothing upon Earth that I desire in comparison of thee. My Flesh and my Heart faileth, but God is the strength of my Life, and my Portion for ever: **Phil. 3.** And declaring, with **St. Paul**, I esteem all things as Dung that I may win Christ.

6. And thus at last we shall arrive to a Sixth, which is the last I shall mention at present; an,  
In-

Indifference and Contempt, or, rather indeed, a Satisfaction in, and Desire for Death, This was likewise St. Paul's Case, *I desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ, which is far better.* Phil. 1. So that, by living in a holy Awe and Fear of Death, which was the first Effect I mentioned, we advance by Degrees to a State of being perfectly contented with it, nay of thinking the time long, and earnestly wishing, that our Lord would in Mercy hasten his coming. And this frame of Mind is the highest Degree of Comfort and Happiness, possible for Good Men to attain to, while they are yet in a State of Mortality. And what need I say more to persuade my Reader, that he would be very frequent and serious in the Meditations of, and Provision for, this important Day? Observe how *Job* describes the security of the Good Man, *Thou shalt not be afraid of Destruction, when it cometh; At Calamity and Famine thou shalt Laugh, neither shalt thou be afraid of the Beasts of the Earth; For thou shalt be in League with the Stones of the Field, and the Beasts of the Field shall be at Peace with thee. Thou shalt know that thy Tabernacle shall be in Peace, and shalt come to thy Grave in a full Age, as a Shock of Corn cometh in his Season.* Job. 4. And a very significant Similitude this is, if we reflect, that a Good Man's Death is the first day of his Harvest, in which he begins to reap the Product of all those Good Deeds, which he hath sown in this Life, and which are then grown up to full Maturity and Prodigious increase. I conclude therefore this Point, as *Job* does that Chapter; *Lo, this we have searched, so it is; hear it, and know thou it for thy Good.*

## C H A P. XI.

*Of the Sinners Punishment after this Life.*

OF all the Means, which God is pleased to make use of for the reclaiming Men from a Wicked Course, and working them up to that holy Resolution, which it is the Design of this Book to promote, none seem better calculated for the Frailty of Human Nature, than the Threatnings of Vengeance upon obstinate Transgressours. This is, no doubt, the Reason, why Prophets at every turn, thunder out Plagues and Destruction to their back-sliding People. And we can easily satisfy our selves, why this Method should be more successful than the rest, because it falls in so exactly with the Fundamental Principle of all our Actions: I mean the natural Love we bear to our selves, and consequently the natural Fear of our own Danger and Ruine. Accordingly we have Instances of its prevailing upon very stubborn and disingenuous Tempers. The City of Nineveh were presently awaken'd into Repentance, when the Prophet *Jonas* foretold the Destruction of their City so nigh at Hand. And even Soldiers and Publicans, Men of Proof against other Impressions, came unto *John Baptist*, and were solicitous to know their Duty, and to save themselves, upon his declaring that, *The Axe was laid to the Root of the Tree, and every Tree that brought not forth Good Fruit should presently be hewn down, and cast into the Fire.* Upon this Account, after the Consideration of our own Death,

and

Luke 3.

and a Judgment to come, I cannot but think it may be of great use, to say something, with regard to those Punishments, which are reserved for them that live and die impenitent.

And upon this Occasion, I shall bespeak my Reader, as *St. Bernard* did his Audience, "If thou art lost, O Man, (says he) to all Shame and Modesty, which yet are Principles becoming so noble a Creature; if thou have a feeling of Sorrow and Remorse, which the stupidity of carnal Minds is often dead to; yet lose not the impressions of Fear, which are common even to the brute Beasts. We load an Ass, and tire him out with his Labour, and he careth not for it; but if we would thrust him into the Fire, or throw him down a deep Precipice, love of Life, and fear of Death, and natural Instinct, prevail with even this otherwise insensible Creature, to avoid and run away from it. Fear then at least, and be not more insensible, than this despised Animal. Fear Death, and Judgment, and Hell: Fear is therefore called the beginning of Wisdom, rather than Shame or Sorrow, because this Passion is more powerful than either of the other. *Remember the End*, Eccles. 7. and thou shalt never do amiss, says the Wise Man; and sure Men would not dare to sin, if they did but remember the Punishments after this Life, in which a Wicked Course will end at last.

1. *First* then, As to those Punishments in general, though the Scripture had not described the greatness of them at all to us, yet there are some Considerations, which our own Reason is capable of offering, sufficient to convince us, that they will be exceeding severe and grie-



vous to be Born. For *First*, as God shews himself a God in all his Works, that is, Great and Wonderful, and Terrible; so we have Reason to think, he will not fail to do in his Punishments, after a very particular manner. Hence he hath distinguished himself by those Titles, *The God of Justice*, and *the God of Vengeance*. And *David* does not only confess, that we cannot subsist under his Anger, but exaggerates the Matter yet more, after a very elegant Manner.

**Psal. 90. 2.** *Who can understand the Power of thy Wrath? for even thereafter as a Man feareth, so is thy Displeasure.* Meaning that even the Passion of Fear itself, though infinitely the most extravagant of all others, cannot yet exceed in this Point, nor form to it self Images more dreadful, than are those Miseries, which they, who have provoked God, shall actually endure. And since his other Works of Majesty so far transcend our utmost Capacity of conceiving them, we may infer, that his Hand, Almighty in punishing will not exert it self less amazingly, than we see already it hath done, in other Instances of the same Almighty Power. And hence it is, that God himself calls upon Men to fear him from the Consideration of his Omnipotence, manifested in the Wonders of the Creation, intimating, that the Revenge he will one Day take upon those, who harden their Hearts against this Fear, shall not fail to hold a Correspondence and just Proportion with his other Works; and to exceed the utmost Stretch of humane Knowledge and Imagination, as those plainly do.

2. Another Measure of God's Severity in punishing may be taken from his marvellous and unspeakable Mercy. For as this is the very Nature

ture and Perfection of the Godhead, so likewise is Justice: and these Two as the Psalmist expresses it, *Embrace and Kiss each other*: that is, they are so tempered, as both to be Consistent, and both to be Equal, that is, infinite in God. The many astonishing instances then of God's incomprehensible Mercy, in saving and pardoning them that repent, and all he hath done for the bringing Men to the Knowledge and Fruition of himself; (with regard to which such pardoned Offenders are stiled *Vessels of Mercy*;) helps us to conceive the severity of his Justice towards those obdurate and impenitent Wretches, who will not be wrought upon by all his gracious Methods; and for that Reason are termed *Vessels of Wrath*, i. e. Persons fitted for Destruction, ripe for Vengeance, and such as he resolves to exercise his Rage and utmost Indignation upon.

3. A Third Consideration to the same Purpose may be his Patience and Long-Suffering, which restrains him from cutting Men off in their Sins at present. He looks on now, as if he regarded not; and suffers many Wretches to go on from one Wickedness to another, from one Year to another, to live to a great Age in transgressing his Laws, and in contempt of his Divine Majesty. He permits the persuasions of his Word, the Promises and Invitations, the Threatnings and Examples of his Anger, the good Motions of his Spirit and Grace, and all the means that infinite Goodness can devise for the gaining over Reasonable Creatures, to be neglected, abused, despised, ridiculed. And can we think he will always endure this? Would any of our Brethren, our Equals bear the hundred Thousandth Part of the Affronts we put upon God?

Among

- Among us, 'tis a ruled Case, that Patience abused aggravates the Provocation, and the longer we spare, the more we think we have a Right to punish. And is it not so, think you, with our Master in Heaven too? Sure I am St. Paul upbraids Men, for not knowing i.e. not considering, *That the goodness of God leads to Repentance; and tells them, who despise such forbearances and long-suffering, that by their hardness and impenitent Heart, they treasure up to themselves Wrath against the day of Wrath; and Revelation of the Righteous Judgment of God; who shall render to every Man according to his Deeds.* The longer the Heap is gathering the more it will increase, and when they are ripe for Destruction, then they shall be paid; as the Prophet expresses it, *Measure for Measure according to the Multitude of their own Abominations.* Hence, no doubt, God makes use of that Expression to Abraham, *The Iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.* And our Saviour to the Scribes and Pharisees; *Fill ye up then the Measure of your Fathers: And the Angel to St. John, He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still; For behold I come, and my Reward is with me, to give every Man according as his Work shall be.* By all which we are given to understand, that forbearance will not last always: that Gentleness in this Life is a Preface and Preparation to severity in the next. With regard to which we may very well interpret that of David, *The Lord shall laugh the Wicked to Scorn, for he hath seen that his Day is coming.* Even the dreadful Day of Account, when God shall deal with every obdurate Sinner, as he threatens to do with Jerusalem, in Terms that well express the unrelenting Vengeance of that Day. *An End is come, it watcheth for*
- Rom. 2. 4, 5.
- Gen. 15.
- Mat. 23. 32.
- Rev. 22. 11, 12.
- Psal. 37.
- Ezek. 7. 6, &c.

for thee; behold IT IS COME. I will pour out my Fury, and accomplish mine Anger upon thee; I will judge thee according to thy Ways, and will recompence thee for all thine Abominations. Mine Eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity. Destruction is come, the Day draweth near, and ye shall know, that I am the Lord that smiteth.

## SECT. II.

*Of the Nature, of the Punishment appointed for Wicked Men after this Life:*

BY what hath been said of this Punishment in general, we cannot but be convinced, how justly the Apostle observes, that it is a fearful *thing to fall into the Hands of the living God.* Heb. 12. But this will be yet much more evident if we proceed in the *Next* place, to consider, what the Scriptures have discovered to us concerning the quality and manner of that Punishment, which shall be inflicted upon Sinners after their Departure out of this World. And, though no finite Understanding is able to conceive, much less can any Tongue or Pen express, the bitterness and extremity of those Torments the Reprobate endure; yet shall I endeavour to give such an Account of them at least; as may be of use to rouse the careless and sensual into some Consideration, for prevention of such insupportable, such incomprehensible, Misery.

First then, For the Place, in which the Damned suffer, this is expressed and described in Scripture by several Names, all denoting Horrour and Misery. Such as *Hell*, the *Pit*, the place of *Darkness*, the *Deep*, the *Lake of God's Wrath*, Psal. 10. Rev. 20. Mar. 22. the *Lake of Fire and Brimstone*, utter *Darkness*.

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And what sort of Inhabitants it is stored with, and what their Employment is, we are told, that they are *the Devil and his Angels*; *Spirits created for Vengeance, which in their Fury lay on sore Strokes*. But the most usual Title is that of *Gehenna*, or *Hell*, alluding to the *Valley of Hinnom* near *Jerusalem*; where the Idolatrous Jews formerly sacrificed their Children to *Moloch*; a place afterwards made a common Dunghil. So that this Word imports the Barbarity of the Tormentors, the miserable Shrieks, and Cries, and Howlings of the Sufferers, and the loathsome Filthiness of the place it self; with Regard to this it is called *Tophet*, another Name for that *Valley of Hinnom*, which *Isaiah* says is ordained of old, made deep and large, the Pile thereof is Fire and much Wood, and the Breath of the Lord, like a stream of Brimstone, doth kindle it.

Such is the Dungeon of the damned: And for the Pains they undergo, we may observe that as Heaven and Hell are contrary, assigned to different sorts of Persons, and for different Causes; so are the Properties, and Conditions, and Effects of each, directly contrary. Whatever then is spoken in Scripture concerning the Blessedness of the one, the Reverse of all that, we may conclude, goes to make up the Calamities of the other. And when *St. Paul* saith, that

*1 Cor. 11. Eye hath not seen, nor Ear heard, neither hath it entered into the Heart of man to conceive the Things which God hath prepared for them that love him*; it follows from hence, that neither hath any Heart been able to conceive the things, which God hath decreed to inflict upon them that hate him. And, when the State of the Blessed is said to be perfect Felicity, and to want no Ingredient that can be had or desired, to make Good Men

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Happy; the Misery of the Damned must likewise be understood to be extreme and absolute, and to want no one Aggravation, which can contribute to make the Wicked perfectly Miserable. This Blessedness and Misery, by consequence, are both infinite, both universal.

And herein is a mighty Difference between the Wretchedness of this, and that of the next Life: that, all Men's Sufferings at present admit of Degrees, and Measure, and extend only to some particular Part or Respect; but there, no Part shall be free, no one Consideration shall be found, in regard of which the Sufferer is exempted. And yet our Pains, though thus limited at present, are sometimes so extreme, that we are not able to support them, and a Man would not be content to endure the Gout, the Stone, nay the Tooth-ach, long together, to gain the greatest Advantage in the World. But suppose now the whole Body at once to be in the utmost Pain, that every Joynt, or Vessel of it is capable of; suppose all this without the least Abatement or Intermission, Who could abide, who can imagin, the lamentable Condition of that Man? But then consider again what difference there is, between enduring this Torment for a few Days, and to all Eternity; between enduring it, upon a soft Bed, and in a boyling Furnace; between having ones Friends and Comforters about him, and Furies and Enemies torturing and insulting over him: Think of this, Sinner, and if thou wouldst be content to do and suffer a great deal, rather than undergo the less for a little while; be so Wise, so kind to thy self, as to take a little Trouble, rather than smart under the Greater for ever and ever.

It is really Matter of Wonder and Amazement, that God should discover so many dreadful Circumstances of this Punishment, and yet that stupid Men should entertain so little Fear of it. The Universality and Extremity of these Pains are, not only to be inferred from the Reasons already alledged, but sufficiently declared in Scripture. There we are told that the Damned shall be tortured Day and Night; and

Rev. 20. of Babylon it is said, *Give her Torment and Sorrow:*  
10. 18. 7. By this manner of Expression is intimated to us,

that the Pains of Hell are exercised, not, like the Sufferings of this World, for Chastisement and Reformation; but for Affliction and just Revenge. And since, in such Executions, the Extremity is used to bear proportion to the Offence to be made exemplary by it, and to the Power and Dignity of the Person offended; Imagine, as well as you are able, the bitterness of those Torments, which Almighty God shall inflict upon the Reprobate in the next Life, infinite as his own Wisdom and Power; and unrelenting as the Sinners Heart was formerly. For so it is threatned expressly: *Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my Hand, and no Man regarded, I will also laugh at your Calamity, and mock when your Fear cometh.*

Prov. 1. 24,  
25.

Besides these Sufferings, Common to all, it hath been an Opinion much received, that there shall be particular sorts of Torments, suited to the Quality of each Man's Offence, and this is implied in those places of Scripture, which speak of God's recompensing Sinners, according to the Work of their own Hands, and filling them with the fruit of their own Devices. As there are different Sins (says an antient Writer) so shall there be variety of Punishments. The Adul-

Psal. 28.

Prov. 1.

Ephr. de

ver. Par

nit. cap. 2.

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terer shall have one kind of Torment, the Murderer another, the Robber and Extortioner another, the Drunkard another, the Lye and false-swearer another. Each that which shall be most sensible and afflicting to him. And then he proceeds; that the Proud Man shall be trodden under Foot, the Glutton Gnawed with extreme Hunger; the Drunkard parched up with unquenchable Thirst; the Voluptuous filled with Gall; the Tender and Delicate seared with hot Irons. All which some have thought to be denoted in that description of the Wicked Man's Sufferings given at large by *Job*. But certain it is, that the Torments of every Sinner shall be extreme beyond all Imagination; and that there shall be no possibility left of one Moment's Intermision or Comfort. This is sufficiently declared by that Parable of *Lazarus* and the Rich-man, where not so much as one drop of Water, could be obtained to cool his Tongue. Some small Refreshment it seems this would have been to him, could his Request have prevailed for it. But he that before had denyed the Crumbs which fell from his Table, cannot now obtain for even this Drop of Water. He does not presume to ask a full deliverance, and he cannot be heard for so poor a Relaxation. Chap. 10. Luk. 16.

Good God! What a strange necessity was this Gay Man, who so lately had the World at Will, driven to? what a wretched Change is this, from the Jollity and Plenty he had been accustomed to, all his Life-long upon Earth? O! that the Men who live in sinful Wealth, would consider this Example of God's implacable severity! O! that we would take warning and grow Wise, from the Calamities of others, which, if we do not, will certainly be our own, and



are therefore revealed to us, that we may prevent and avoid them.

But if, to all this, we add the Eternity of those Torments. This will increase the Misery beyond all humane Comprehension. No Affliction in this World is so violent, but that length of time either removes it quite, or in some good Degree abates it. Either the Tormentor ; or the Person tormented dies, or some other Accident happens, to break the Force of the Calamity. But here we have no Ground to build such Hope or Comfort upon. The Scripture says, *They shall be tormented for ever and ever*, that their *Punishment must be everlasting* ; and, so long as God continues to be God, he shall continue to hate, and to execute Vengeance upon Sin : Here both the Inflicter, and the Sufferer, must live eternally ; and the State of the Wicked is therefore called Death, not to denote, that they shall cease to be, but that they shall be in Misery, out of which there is no Redemption.

Rev. 20.

Mat. 25.

Oh ! ( says a holy Father in one of his Meditations ) could but the Damned have assurance, that their Torments should last no more Thousand Years, than there are Stars in the Firmament, or Grains of Sand upon the Sea-shore, even this, so distant, prospect of release would afford some consolation. But this Word *Never* breaks their Heart ; As it must needs do, to think, that after Millions of Ages they are no nearer to their Journey's End, than when they first set out. Think but how tedious, how insupportable one single Hour would be, to be stretched upon a Rack, or lie in flames of Fire and scalding Brimstone. We find by Experience, that one restless Night, to a Man in Sick-

ness

ness or Pain, seems a whole Age. He tosses and turns from side to side, tells every Clock, and waits for Morning, though upon a soft Bed, and with his Friends about him. And, if such a one were sure, that this uneasiness would lie upon him for seven Years incessantly, the Grief of that Thought were scarce to be born. But if one Night in a Fever be so grievous, what must Millions of Ages be in the Lake of God's Wrath? What that Worm which never dies, and that Fire which is never to be quenched? Continuance renders even the most grateful Things troublesome and nauseous, but to continue for ever in unspeakable Torments! Jesus deliver us in his great Mercy! how is it to be endured? how is it to be thought of?

To all that went before, I might add another Circumstance, which the Scripture represents the uncomfortableness of this Condition by, and that is, the dismal Darkness of those infernal Prisons; than which nothing is more terrible to human Nature. And also that, of suffering unpitied, which in this World we find by experience to be no small Aggravation to any Adversity. But these, though grievous in themselves, I rather choose but just to mention only; because if the Exquiteness, and the Eternity of those Torments will not deter Men from offending God, and drawing down infinite Miseries upon themselves, it is not in reason to be expected, that any other Considerations relating to them, should have a more successful influence.

## S E C T. III.

*The Second Sort of Punishment, called that of Loss.*

**T**HE whole account of this everlasting Misery hitherto mentioned, sad as it is, does yet make but a part of the Sinners Punishment, distinguished by Divines by *Pena sensus*, or those sensible Torments inflicted upon Soul and Body in Hell. But besides this there is another Branch usually termed the *Penalty of Loss*, and comprehending all those Advantages, which these wretched Men have given out of their Hands, and forever deprived themselves of. That this Distinction is not merely notional, may appear by this plain and familiar Example. When a Person of Wealth and Honour falls under the Sentence of the Law for some capital Crime, he does not only suffer Death, but loses all he enjoyed; his Estate is confiscated, his Blood is tainted, his Family are ruined. And the Detriment and Dishonour, which by this Means fall upon his Wife and Children, and Relations; the forfeiture of Goods and Estate; the stain upon his Reputation, and Honour; the undoing of all his Posterity; the being cut off in his Youth, and snatched away from all his Pleasures and Enjoyments, is not only a real, but, in the Esteem of many, a more afflicting Punishment, than any bodily Sufferings whatsoever.

And if the Case be thus in Temporals, which yet are but mere Trifles, when put into the Balance against eternal Losses; much more may we conceive it, to aggravate the Punishment of the Damned, who are cut off for ever from the sight,

sight and fruition, and favour of God, and by that, from the Great the True, the only Happiness. For God is the sole Fountain of all Good, and in the Love, and Enjoyment of, and union with him, the very substance of Man's everlasting Felicity consists. What a wretchedness would it be thought, to lose in this World all Sight, and Sense, and Influence, all the cheering Warmth and Vigour, of the Sun; to have all our Organs of Sense numb'd up, and live under a perpetual Inactivity, frozen up with Cold, and imprisoned in Darkness? And yet all this is not the Thousandth part of what Men suffer by the Loss of God's Presence, the Father of Lights, the Author and Summ of infinite and everlasting Glory. All Bliss and Joy, the Society of Angels, the Praises and Triumphs of a heavenly State, the pleasing Reflections of having done well; In a Word, every Thing that can contribute to make Men Easy and Happy is lost at once; and all the contrary ingredients of Misery are included under this Particular.

Here lies the true Ground of that horrible Torture, called the *never-dying Worm*, that lies perpetually corroding and devouring the Hearts of the Wicked, those Stings and Agonies of sad Remorse, with which their Consciences are for ever griping and gnawing them. And this seems principally to consist in the Remembrance of the Instruments and Causes of their present Calamities. That Negligence, and Folly, and incurable Perverseness, by which these Men have lost that Felicity, which others, under the same Dispensations, and Means of Grace, have gained and secured the possession of for ever. And who is able to express that grinding Pain, which shall then pierce their very Souls, upon  
every

every Recollection, what Opportunities were offer'd them, to have escaped that dreadful Torment, and to have been as inexpressibly Satisfied and Happy, as now they are Miserable and Discontented? How easy it once was to have compassed this, how often they were convinced, that this ought to be done; how they resolved to do it, and yet fell back again from those good Resolutions: How many Warnings they had of their Danger, and yet how little Impression these made upon them: How exceeding Vain all those Trifles here below were, upon which they threw away their Time and Pains; How they have sold their Souls and Heaven for nought; and are come now to feel those insupportable Miseries, which they could not be perswaded to fear: how those whom they thought Fools in this World, are now exalted; and how despicably foolish those Methods are, which they once mistook for the only true Wisdom. These and a thousand more cutting Reflections will then be laid before them with all their Aggravating Circumstances, but none more killing than that, of their Condition being past all Hope, all Remedy; and that, by coming too late, these Convictions come altogether in vain. Yet shall this fruitless Regret never cease, never intermit; and no one Consideration shall contribute to *their weeping and wailing and gnashing of Teeth*, more than this, that they are wretched beyond all Comfort, without all redress; that their own carelessness and obstinacy hath made them so; that they cannot help seeing this, and yet they cannot see, or lament it to any Effect. This Indignation, and Rage, and perpetual fretting shall drive them to Despair, and rend their Hearts in pieces.

Oh!

Oh! How will these Men wish, that it were not yet too late to amend! Oh! Had they but another short Life to lead, with what Watchfulness and Diligence would they improve every Moment! Oh! Might they but be tryed once more, how faithfully would they serve God! But this is not to be done, and even that Blood which ransomed a whole World, cannot purchase one days time, to make a second Experiment, upon those who have abused, and were not reformed by the former. 'Tis we alone, my Friends, we, who by the Grace and Long-Suffering of our Good God, are yet alive on this side Hell; We have this inestimable Benefit of time, for Prevention and Amendment: And would to God we were so happy, as to resolve immediately, and to make the best of this day of ours, while it lasts. For alas! It wears away apace, and will quickly be past with us too: We shall not be able to retrieve one of these slighted Hours, that now are thought to hang upon our Hands; No, not though we would redeem it at the price of Ten Thousand Worlds. For all this, no doubt, were it in their Power, the Damned would gladly do; and therefore the true Method of managing this Talent, now it is in our Hands, is so to use and put it out to Interest, that when we shall go out of this World, we may have no cause to wish our selves here again, or to curse the day that ever we came into it at all.

*Behold now is the accepted time, behold now is the Day of Salvation.* But then it is, *to day, that we must not harden our Hearts,* for we know not what may become of us to Morrow. It may be, *To Morrow,* if we defer till then, these Hearts may yet be more hard and secure, than ever they

2 Cor. 7.

they were heretofore ; it may be before *To Morrow*, we may be out of a Condition, and actually in those Miseries, which to day might be prevented. Had *Pharaoh* followed those relentsings close, which the first Plagues incited in his Heart, how many dreadful Blows had He, and his People escaped ? But it was too late to think of retreating, when he was in the midst of the *Red-Sea*. Had the Rich Man had any Compassion, while *Lazarus* lay at his Gate, he had not needed to ask a drop of Water for the cooling of his Tongue ; but even this was asked to no purpose, when he came to be tormented in that Flame. Then he would fain have obtained a Message from the Dead, to warn his Brethren of their Danger ; but he is answered, that this was neither necessary, nor like to meet with better Success, than the means of Salvation, which were lost upon them already.

For what indeed can be done more for the reclaiming Wicked Men ? What course can be taken with those, upon whom neither Exhortation, nor Threatnings, nor Warnings, nor Examples will do any Good ? We know, or ought to know, that many have fallen under God's displeasure, who do not appear to have been greater Sinners than our selves ; We know, nay cannot but know, that we must shortly die ; and, if we commit the same Faults with them, shall certainly receive the same Condemnation. We may be well assured, that if we live on still in Wickedness, we cannot possibly be saved ; We have seen, that the Miseries of the Wicked hereafter are intolerable, are infinite, are eternal ; We cannot but confess, that they who for any short Pleasure or Advantage here, have cast themselves into them, are of all Men most  
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Miserable, because most obstinately Foolish. Why then do we not lay aside every weight, which may hinder us in this Race? Why do we not break loose from the Snares of this wicked World, and burst a sunder all our Chains, by the Force of Godly Resolution and Zeal? Why should we venture to sleep one Night more in Sin, since that Night may happen to be our last, and cut us off from all our Hope for ever?

Sure, if we be wise, if we be Men, and pretend to act with Reason, we shall clear our souls of these Dangers immediately; We shall draw near to God, while he is willing to receive us. We shall be wrought upon by *Moses and the Prophets*, by the standing and ordinary Methods of Salvation, as the Rich-Man and his Relations ought to have been, in the time of their Health and Prosperity. Let that Example of his be frequently before our Eyes, that his Torments and fruitless Wishes may quicken our Holy Resolutions. God is a wonderful God, in his Patience, and Goodness, and infinite Condescension; in this Life he courts us, he seeks us, he lays himself (as it were) at our Feet; and all, to move us to our own Good, to win us, to draw us, to pluck us back from Destruction. But after this Life is ended, he will be no less wonderful in Justice and Vengeance. He then will change his style, and deal with us after quite another Manner. And oh! the Terrors of that Day, when the meek Lamb of God shall turn a fierce and Angry Lion; and our much injured Saviour approve himself a just and implacable Avenger! And well he may do so, after all he hath done in vain on our behalf already: For the Man, who is so invited, so assisted, so forewarned, as every Christian is, or  
may



may be ; He that sees his Danger plain before his Face, and is not moved to caution by it, may be pitied as a lost Wretch, but cannot be helped, or kept from being lost ; since no remedies can ever do good to those, who will not let them have their proper Operation.

But you will say perhaps, " What remedy is " there after all, by which these Miseries may " be avoided ? I see my own Danger, I believe " the Threatnings of God, and the Testimony " of my Conscience against me, makes me trem- " ble at them ; but how shall I mend the Mat- " ter which I find so bad ? I answer ; If what you say be true, You are in a very good Way toward it already ; for, to believe, and to be afraid of God's Judgments is a fair step towards your Recovery. These are the Groundwork of all Good Motions. Faith lays the Foundation, and Fear will carry it up to Conversion and Amendment. But yet these alone are not enough ; for the Devils themselves, *St. James* observes, do so much : And therefore these must have other Virtues built upon them still ; Hope, and Love, and Repentance for former Faults, Sorrow for the past, and sincere stedfast Resolution of living better for the time to come.

This is the true Remedy indeed ; A sovereign Medicine for all our Spiritual Diseases, the only Prevention of all the Miseries we have been treating of ; This diverts the Threatnings of God, pacifies and shelters the Sinner from his Wrath ; and does in some sort Vanquish and Triumph over the Divine Justice. For as God never did, nor will, nor can, (according to the Stated-Measures of his Dealings with Mankind ) forgive any Offender, who does not Re-

pent :

pent: So neither ever did he, or will, or can, deny his Mercy and Pardon to any, who *with true Faith and Hearty Repentance turn to him.* And why then should we not apply this Remedy in its proper Season, and take our Distemper in time, before our Symptoms be desperate? And (as St. *Augustine* says upon those Words, *Whither shall I flee then from thy Presence?*) Whither can we flee, but to his Goodness by Repentance, whose Omnipotence we had armed against us by Offending: For no Man can flee from him successfully but by fleeing to him; from the severity of his Angry Justice, to the Sanctuary of his Mercy in Christ Jesus. Were this Cure to be obtained at never so great Expence, to be sought at never so great a Distance, yet even thus it were our Wisdom to procure it; much more then, when it is always nigh at Hand, and easy to be had.

If a Man under Sentence of Death, and upon the Way to Execution could be put in a Way of delivering himself so readily, would he be deaf to the Proposals; Would he suffer any other thing to divert him from compassing such an escape? And yet our Case is much more urgent; for temporal Death bears no Proportion to eternal Torments; and an unreformed Sinner is as much in the way to Execution, and (considering the uncertainty of Life) may undergo the Law much sooner, than any Malefactor, condemn'd by an Earthly Judge. What strange stupidity is it then to be thoughtless and remiss in so important an Affair? Our Lord hath not only provided, not only discovered, the Remedy, but hath put it in our own Power; and it depends entirely upon our own Will, whether we will be safe by it or not. For what  
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can be more in any Man's Choice, than whether he will dislike his past vicious Courses, whether he will betake himself for Council and Assistance to the Guides of his Soul, the Ministers of the Church of Christ; whether he will qualify himself for having those Sins regularly loosed by these Delegates of our Lord upon Earth, which upon these Terms will most certainly be loosed in Heaven; whether he will have that Pardon sealed by the blessed Sacraments, and so testify his Union with true Believers, as a Member of his Lord's Mystical Body. The leaving such Commissioners behind him as his Priests, such precious and undoubted Pledges of his Love and Reconciliation, as his Blessed Body and Blood, are inestimable Comforts and Advantages; Such as must needs rise up in Judgment at the last Day against all them, who neglect or refuse to make a due use of, and take refuge in them, for the present Peace and everlasting Salvation of their Souls, by thus renewing their Covenant with God, and obtaining full remission of their former Sins.

To conclude this Point. Do not suppose, that being called a Christian will avail in the Day of Distress, if thou do not live, and act as becomes a Person distinguished by that Name. If thou hast fallen into Sins, inconsistent with the true import of this Glorious Title, lose no time but break off from the Bondage of such Vices without delay: Apply the Means of Grace prescribed here, for these are the ordinary Methods of bringing Men to Heaven, and consequently thou canst have no Foundation for dependance upon any other. Render thyself capable of Reconciliation by the Sacraments of the Church, and uniting thyself to the Head,

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by these Testimonies of thy Union with the Body: And, thus released from the burden of Sin, and supported ( as thou certainly wilt be ) by the inward Consolations of God's holy Spirit, proceed to the Exercise of Good Works, and *bring forth Fruits meet for Repentance*. So shalt thou not only avoid the Miseries of being irreversibly banished from the presence of God, and *Suffering the Vengeance of eternal Fire*; but be able with St. Paul to look up with a comfortable Assurance of that *Crown of Righteousness*, which he 2 Tim. 4. 8; declares to have been laid up for him, and for all them that follow the Example of his Conversion and Zealous Piety. Of which Crown, it's Excellency and Glory, I shall ( as I am able of a Subject so far transcending the utmost human Capacity ) say something in the following Chapter.

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## C H A P. XII.

### *The noble Rewards of Good Men.*

**T**Hat nothing might be wanting, on God's part, to perswade Men to their Duty, he hath made that Duty their Happiness. And, because there is in Mankind great variety of Tempers, some are more effectually moved by one, and some by another Passion; therefore he hath so ordered the matter, that no Constitution whatsoever should want Motives suited to work upon it. The infinite Benefits we have received from God, might be sufficient, one would imagin, to lead us to repentance out of meer Gratitude; but every Man hath not a Temper ingenuous  
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enough to be grateful. The fear of Punishment might drive and fright Men into better Manners, but Objects of Terrour Men strive all they can to keep out of their sight. Our wise Master hath therefore found another Inducement, which Men should even delight to consider, and to press upon themselves; One, which meets with a Principle of human Nature, as universal, a Spring as strong as even Fear it self; grounded in the natural Love of themselves, as that is, the Desire I mean of Advantage and Happiness. This is the motive, which now remains to be proceeded upon, and I am perfectly content, that all that went before should go for nothing, if I do not make it appear, that this Master pays his Servants more liberally than any other; and, that the Gain, accruing from that Service, is greater and more desirable, than any other Course which we can possibly take, or think of. And if this Profit can be made out too, then I hope there will be no Difficulty unanswer'd, which Men in Reason can pretend to object, against taking up that Holy *Resolution*, which it is the Design of this Book to bring every one of its Readers over to.

Now, As God in all other Respects acts agreeably to the Greatness of his Majesty, so does he especially in the Instances of Bounty and Magnificence. Whatever we do, or can do, in his Service, is in truth, a Debt, and but a poor Tribute, in comparison of what we owe our Almighty Lord and Creatour. As such, it cannot pretend to any Reward. Yet such is his Munificence, that he suffers no Man to serve him for Nought; he considers the very meanest and most insignificant Instances of our Obedience and Love, and hath declared, that even

a Cup of Cold Water given for his sake, shall in no wise lose its reward. Mat. 10. 42. Nay, he does not only make Men large amends for what they actually do in regard to him, but he rewards their very Intentions and Good Dispositions to do him Service. He made a Tryal of *Abraham's* Faith, by commanding him to Sacrifice his dear and only Son *Isaac*; but afterwards he contented himself with his readiness to do it, and would not permit him to do the Thing. And for that readiness to obey so trying a Command, he declares, that in *that Seed of Abraham*, all the Nations of the Earth should be blessed, that he should be multiplied as the Stars of Heaven, and the Sand which is upon the Sea-shore for multitude. Gen. 22. When *David* had consider'd with himself the indecency of building himself a stately Palace, while the Ark of his God was lodged in a mean and moveable Tabernacle, and thereupon resolved to build him a Temple; Though this Work was, for wise Reasons reserved for his Son, yet the Will in *David* was taken for the Deed; and recompensed with a Promise of establishing an everlasting Kingdom in his Posterity: A Promise which we see now accomplished in Christ and his Church. 2 Sam. 7. That this is the general Method of his Dealings, our Lord himself declares, Mat. 20. in the Parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard; and in that other Passage, *Behold I come, and my reward is with me.* Rev. 22. So far is God from suffering any Man's Labour to be lost: And, though he do more than compensate our utmost Pains, by the Blessings and manifold Benefits even of this present Life; yet is this Payment now in hand, an Earnest and Pledge only, and such, as comes infinitely short of that most liberal Retribution which all his faithful Servants

shall receive after this Life, at the *Resurrection of the Just.*

# SECT. I.

## *Of this Reward in general.*

**T**His future Recompence reserved for Good Men is the Argument of my Discourse in this place. And, in treating of it, I shall enquire, what manner of Reward it is, and whether it be large enough to countervail all that Labour and Hardship, which the Service of God in this World requires from us. And here, if we attend to those Descriptions given of it in Scripture, we shall find it represented by a *Kingdom*, a *Glorious*, a *Heavenly*, an *Eternal*, and a *most Blessed Kingdom*. All which Titles are designed to denote the marvellous Greatness of this Reward. Since in this World no Monarch can be found so bountiful to the very best of his Servants, as to give him a *Kingdom*, in compensation of his Service. But if any earthly Prince were both able and disposed to do all this, yet could he not bestow a *Heavenly*, an *Eternal*, or a *Blessed Kingdom*, or one in any Degree comparable to that.

Mat. 25.  
2 Tim. 4.  
2 Pet. 1.  
Luk. 14.

Further yet, when St. Paul observes that Eye hath not seen, nor Ear heard, neither hath it entered into the Heart of Man to conceive the Things, which God hath prepared for them that love him, this calls upon us to enlarge our Thoughts, and entertain much higher Notions of it still. We may have seen many wonderful Things in our own Days: We may have heard of many, more wonderful than we ever saw: We may form to our Minds Ideas of Things, far exceeding

1 Cor. 11.

ceeding all we have ever seen or heard: But this it seems is not possible so much as to be *Conceived*. How then shall we come to understand its Value? Christ himself calls it the *hidden Manna*, *Rev. 11.* and something which *no Man knoweth but he that receiveth it*. But still, *Ex pede Herculem*, though we cannot reach its full Proportions, yet some Conjecture of it we may make; and by such Draughts in little, raise our Affections to the Admiration and Desire of it; though all the Scripture, or our own Collections, discover of it, be much inferiour to, and far distant from, the Greatness of the Thing it self.

I have already observed, that the Terms used to express this Matter, import that all who partake of it shall be *Kings, happy Kings*, most *Happy* to all *Eternity*. Which is yet farther confirmed by its being styled, a *Crown of Life*, a *Throne of Glory*, a *Paradise*, or a place of Pleasure, and a *Life everlasting*. St. John for his own and our Instruction and Comfort, describes it by the most magnificent and beautiful Images, that sensible Things can suggest to us. He compares it to a City whose Buildings are of fine Gold, whose Walls are of precious Stones; whose Light is Christ himself, in his glorified State, sitting in the midst, and shedding his bright Beams through every part of it. Whose Situation is upon a River of Chrystal, and upon whose Banks grows the Tree of Life, ever flourishing, ever bearing Fruit: In which *Rev. 21.* there is no Night, where no unclean Thing <sup>22.</sup> can enter; and they that are thought worthy to be admitted thither, shall reign for ever and ever. By all which, we are given to understand, that the Majesty, the Glory, the Excellence of this happy State is infinite; the princely Inheritance



ritance of the Son of God, the Kingdom of his Father, the Habitation of the Blessed Trinity, contrived to set forth in its full lustre the Power and Glory of him, whose Power and Glory are endless and unmeasurable. And, when God intends to exert this, who can imagine what that declaration will be?

He was pleased to create certain Creatures to Minister in his presence, and to behold his Glory; Angels, who are Spirits of an excellent Nature far above our Comprehension, and infinite, almost, in Number, as well as glorious in Perfection. When some of those had fallen, and degenerated from their Native Beauty and Excellence, God condescended to frame another Creature, of a far inferiour Condition, to supply their Places. His Goodness formed Man out of the Dust of the Earth, and appointed this World to entertain him for a time, during his State of Discipline and Tryal. But this Earth God created with an intention to destroy it again. And if in the Frame of this perishing World he have expressed such Power and Magnificence; if the Heaven, the Earth, the Seas, and every Element, give such astonishing Proof of the Creatour's Majesty; If that which was made in an Instant with one single Word, to endure for a little while and only to be subervient, to a future and eternal State, be so glorious, so wonderful, in all its Parts; What can we suppose, that Habitation which was prepared for Eternity it self, shall be? If the Cottage of his meanest Servants, provided to shelter and sustain them for a few Days only, be so stately, what is the King's own Palace, where he and his Friends shall reign together for ever? This, we must needs imagine, is a Work, the  
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most glorious, that the Maker's Power and Wisdom could perform, and the Power and Wisdom of that Maker; we know, are incomparably above our Comprehension, and altogether infinite.

The great King *Ahasuerus*, who ruled over Est. 1.  
a Hundred and seven and Twenty Provinces,  
is said to have made a Feast at the Palace of *Susa*,  
to all his Princes and Potentates, for a Hundred and Fourscore Days together. The Prophet tells us, that our Lord and King shall make Isa. 25.  
a solemn Feast to all his People, in his Holy Luke 17.  
Mountain; And that with such Solemnity, that even the Son of God, and Master of the Feast, shall condescend to gird himself, and serve at it. What manner of Entertainment shall this be? A Feast, not to last for any determinate number of Days, but Millions of Millions of Ages; A Feast not served up by Men, but by the Angels, and the very Son of God himself; not to display the Riches of a few Provinces, but the endless Treasures of the King of Kings. How glorious, how joyful, how triumphant a Festival shall that be? How inestimable the blessedness of those Happy Souls, who shall then sit down and Eat Bread in the Kingdom of God? O wretchedly Vain and Stupid Men, who are born to so high a Dignity, and yet cannot be prevailed upon, to consider, and desire, and esteem, their Honour and Happiness!

Several other Considerations there be, which might assist us in forming worthy Ideas of this Reward. If God for Instance, have furnished us with so many Conveniences, and Comforts, and Pleasures, in this place of our Exile, this Habitation of Sinners, this Vale of Misery, appointed only for a Season of Repenting, and

Solil. c. 2.

Weeping, and Mourning, and Suffering; What will he do for us in the next Life, to the Just, to his Friends, in the Day of Joy, and the solemnity of the Marriage of his Son? Thus hath St. *Augustine* very pathetically prosecuted this Argument, in one of his Soliloquies. "O my Lord! says he, if thou hast provided so plentifully for this vile Body of ours, and given it such Advantages, by the Firmament, by the Air, by the Earth, by the Sea, by Light, by Darknes, by cherishing Heat, by refreshing Shades, by Dews, by Showers, by Winds; by Birds, by Fishes, by Beasts; by Trees, by manifold Herbs, by variety of Plants, by the Ministry of all thy Creatures; What manner of Things, Blessed God! How Rich, how Great, how Good, how Innumerable, are those, which thou hast prepared for the Soul in its heavenly Country, where we shall see thee Face to Face? If thou do so much for us in our Prison, what wilt thou do in our Palace? If thou so much bestow in this World upon Good and Bad Men promiscuously, O how plentiful is thy Treasure, which thou hast laid up for Good Men in the Life to come? If thy Enemies and Friends together enjoy so much here below; What shall thy Friends, when separated from those Enemies, What shall they not receive above? If the Days of Fasting and Mourning have such consolation; What shall be the rejoycing of this Marriage Feast? O my Lord! thou art a great God, and great is thy Magnificence, and Sweet is thy Mercy. And, as there is no end of thy Greatness, no number of thy Mercies, no bottom of thy profound Wisdom, no measure of thy Liberality; so neither is  
"there

"there any Number, any Measure, of the  
 "Depth, and Length, and Greatness, and most  
 "diffusive Extent, of thy Rewards laid up for  
 "them, that Love, and Fight for thee.

Another help towards conceiving some part  
 of this Reward in the next Life, would be to  
 remember, and diligently consider the mani-  
 fold Promises of Almighty God, to exalt and  
 dignify all that love and serve him. *Them that* 1 Sam. 11.  
*honour me*, says he, *I will honour*. And David  
 breaks out into terms of Admiration, as if this  
 could not be particularly exprest, *Such Honour*  
*have all his Saints*. But David would have had Psal. 149.  
 much greater Reason for his Wonder, had he Luk. 21.  
 lived under the New Testament, and heard Mat. 19.  
 that Promise of Christ, that his Servants should Luke 22.  
 sit down and Eat, and he himself would serve 1 Cor. 6.  
 them in the Kingdom of his Father; that *they*  
*shall sit in Judgment with him, and judge not only* Gen. 12,  
*Men but even Angels too*. And not only so, but 14, 20.  
 this Honour may be in some sort conceived, by  
 that which he sometimes does to his Servants in Exod. 5, 6,  
 this Life, which yet is a State, wherein he pla- 7, &c.  
 ces them to meet with Contempt, and not with  
 Honour. How great was the Honour done to  
 Abraham, before so many Kings, and that to  
 Moses in Pharaoh's Court, and that to Josuah, Josuah. 10.  
 when the Sun and Moon stood still at his Com-  
 mand; and that to Isaiah, when the Shadow Isa. 38.  
 went back Ten Degrees by his Word, and that  
 to Elijah, when the Heavens were opened and 2 Kings 18.  
 shut at his Determination? And to Elisha, when  
 he cured a Leprosy by his Word, and raised a 2 Kings 5,  
 dead Man to Life, and when his very Bones, & 12.  
 long after his Death, wrought the same Mira-  
 cle? And to name no more, to the Apostles of Acts 5.  
 our Blessed Lord, who heal'd the Infirmities of Acts 19.  
 all

all they laid their Hands upon, of all to whom the Handkerchiefs of *St. Paul* were brought, of as many as the Shadow of *St. Peter*, as he pass'd by, fell upon. What Reverence, what Admiration did these holy Patriarchs, and Prophets, and Apostles find, in the presence of *Melchisedech* and *Abimelech*, and *Pharaoh*, and the Armies of *Israel*, and *Hezekiah*, and *Ahab*, and *Namman*, and the wondering Jews and Gentiles? Could ever any Prince upon Earth boast of such Respects, such Conquests? And, if Christ so eminently distinguished his Servants in this World, of which notwithstanding *his Kingdom was not*; what Dignities, what Trophies must we suppose he hath reserved for them in the other World, where his Kingdom is in perfect fulness; and where every Servant of his shall be crowned, as an eternal King to reign in Conjunction with him?

Once more: Some have framed Notions of this incomparable Bliss, from the three different Receptacles, ordained for Man; though it must be allowed, that there is no necessity of any Thing like an exact Proportion between them. The First is our Mother's Womb; The Second this present World; The Third the Regions of Bliss above. Now these, (say they) must so far resemble each other, that the Last should excel the Second, as much as the Second manifestly does the First: Nay as much more, as heavenly and eternal Things exceed the best and greatest of those that are Temporal and Transitory. So that, as much as the whole World is more capacious and delightful, than the Prison which encloses us before our Birth; no less are the Beauty, the Pleasures, the Majesty of our Heavenly Habitation, preferable to those of  
our

our present State. As far as a Man exceeds an unborn Child, in Strength, Comeliness, Understanding and all, both natural and acquired, Accomplishments, so much and a great deal more do the Glorified Saints exceed the most perfect of mortal Men. And one of these would no more be content to return from that blissful condition, to the most exquisite Degree of what mistaken Men call Happiness here upon Earth; than the best of Men would be satisfied to be reduced to an Embryo. The few Months in which that Embryo grows to maturity for the Birth, are yet much more considerable, when compared with the longest Life upon Earth; than that longest Life can pretend to be, in comparison of Eternity. The Blindness, the Weakness, the Ignorance of that unborn Child, are not so much beneath the Vigour, the Knowledge of the stoutest most and learned Man, as the Darkness, the Folly, and other Calamities of this Life keep us short of that clear Light, and unerring Knowledge, that stable and never decaying State, and the other yet unknown Privileges of the Spirits of Just Men made perfect. So that, upon the whole Matter, something we may know concerning this Bliss; and from these, and other such like Considerations, some general Conjectures may be framed; which though confused and dark, are yet sufficient to raise our Notions of, and vehemently to excite our Affections for, that infinite and incomprehensibly excellent Reward, of which I am now discoursing.

## S E C T II.

*The felicity of Body and Soul in Heaven.*

I shall now proceed to consider this Matter somewhat more particularly, under two Heads; as this Reward extendeth it self to the Bodies or to the Souls, of those, who partake of it. And here *first* with regard to the Body, I shall not follow the subtle Notions of nice and fanciful Men, who busily intrude into Things which they have not seen. It is enough for my present purpose, that the Scripture hath told us, this Flesh at the general Resurrection shall be changed and glorified; that what, like Seed, is cast into the Ground, *a Natural*, shall come up *a Spiritual Body*; what *is sown in Weakness*, shall be raised in Power; what *is sown in Corruption*, shall be raised in Incorruption; that *this Mortal*, shall put on Immortality, that *Christ* shall change our vile Body, and fashion it according to his glorious Body, according to the mighty Working whereby he is able to subdue all Things unto himself. The meaning of all which, to be sure, amounts to thus much; That this Load of Flesh, which is now so cumberfom, and presses down the Mind, shall then cease to obstruct it's noblest Operations, or any more to be a Burden to us; That, we shall then put off all those Passions, which now ruffle and discompose us, and every sensual Appetite, by which at present we are tempted to, and ensnared in Sin. That this Mortal, now subject to so many Inconveniences, liable to so many Alterations, afflicted with so many Diseases, defiled with so many Corruptions, beset with so many Miseries, shall then be placed

ced above the reach of Calamity or Change, Distemper or Decay, made as Glorious and Perfect, as the nature of the Thing will admit; and, thus refined and exalted, shall endure for ever in most exquisite Beauty and Vigour. And these are all such Ornaments and Advantages, as Men would esteem it a mighty blessing to attain to any moderate Proportion of, during their Continuance in this World. And therefore, if we truly love our Bodies, methinks we should shew it in being solicitous to gain them altogether in the highest Degree, in that everlasting Life which is to come.

But, As great and valuable as this Happiness is, it is scarce worthy to be named with that other Part of our Reward, wherein the Soul is more immediately concerned. Here lies the true Excellence, and the very Essence of our Blessedness. For this Part is properly the Mans, and therefore the chief Good, of which humane Nature is capable, must needs consist in the advancing this to its utmost possible Perfection. And such is the Knowledge and Sight of God, the Summ and Source of all Good. *This* (says our Blessed Lord) *is Life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.* John 17. And St. Paul, *We know in part, and we Prophecy in part; but when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away. And now we see through a Glass darkly, but then Face to Face, and shall know even as we are known.* 1 Cor. 13. To the same purpose St. John places the Happiness of the Blessed, and the ground of their being drawn into a Resemblance of the Divine Excellences in this; that then *they shall see God as he is.* John 3. The Reason whereof is, that all the Delights of this World are but very small Particles of



of God's incomprehensible Happiness ; the Crumbs, as it were, that fall from his Table ; That, as all these are derived from him, so are they united and contained in him, much more eminently and absolutely than they are imparted to any Creature whatsoever : And consequently, the proper Perfections of all Creatures are much more fully in God, than they are, or can be, in those very Creatures, whose Perfections they are.

Now the necessary Consequence of this is ; that whosoever is admitted to the Presence and Vision of Almighty God, the Author and Fountain of all Pleasures, must there find all the Goodness of all worldly Things compacted together, and meeting there, as Lines in the common Center, from whence they all are drawn. So that, whatsoever can possibly create true Delight, whether of Body or Mind, here he enjoys the whole with the highest Satisfaction, and most transporting Raptures both of Body and Mind. No Man can imagin, or wish for any Joy, which he shall not find here in its full Perfection. All Knowledge, and Wisdom, and Beauty, and Plenty, and Pleasure, all that can contribute to his Content, all that can attract his Love, or raise his Admiration. There every Faculty of the Mind shall be exercised, its most large and capacious Extent filled, its noblest and most eager Desires gratified ; There every Sense shall be most pleasingly entertained. God shall be Light to our Eyes, Musick to our Ears, Honey to our Taste, and Perfume to our Smell, Knowledge to our Understanding, Acquiescence to our Will, and perpetual Presence to our Memory. In him we shall have all the grateful Variety that delights us here, all the  
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Beauty that allures us here, all the Pleasure that charms us here. Thus shall He be all in all ; the universal Felicity of every Saint, containing, in himself alone, every ingredient of every particular Felicity, without End, or Number, or Measure. " In this Vision of God (says Aug. de " a Pious Author ) we shall Know, we shall Anim. 4. " Love, we shall Rejoyce, we shall praise. We cap. 15. " shall see the Mysteries and Judgments of the " Almighty, which are a bottomless Ocean : " The Causes, the Natures, the Beginning, the " End of every Creature. We shall love un- " measureably ; God, for the infinite attri- " butes of Love, which we shall discover in " him ; our Brethren, as much as our selves, " because we see God love them as much as our " selves, and for the same Reasons, which dis- " pose him to Love us. We shall Rejoyce be- " yond Measure ; for every thing we love in " God will be matter of Joy to us, and these " Motives are infinite ; We shall rejoyce in our " Brethren's Happiness, as in our own, and so " shall have as many distinct Causes of Joy, as " we have partakers in our Bliss ; and, since " these are infinite, no wonder if our Master " chose to say, *Enter thou into the Joy of thy Lord,* " rather than, *Let thy Lord's Joy enter into thee ;* " for no created Heart is large enough to re- " ceive the fullness of this Joy. And then we " must needs, if this be our Case, praise God " indefatigably, incessantly ; with all our Heart, " and all our Strength, with every Power and " Part capable of it, according to that of the " Psalmist, *Blessed are they who dwell in thy House,* " *they will be always praising thee.*

I conclude this Argument, with a Reflection in 1. Ep. of St. Austin to the same purpose. " Our Lord Joan. & de Soliloq. 36.

“ declares the *pure in Heart blessed*, upon this  
 “ Account, *that they shall see God*. From whence  
 “ we may learn that there is a sight of God,  
 “ capable of making Men happy. A sight which  
 “ no Eye hath seen in this World, nor Heart  
 “ conceived. A Prospect, far surpassing the  
 “ Beauty of all Earthly Things, Gold, Silver,  
 “ and precious Stones, Woods, and Fields, and  
 “ Seas; Air and Firmament, Sun and Moon,  
 “ and Stars, and even Angels; for all these de-  
 “ rive their Beauty from hence. *We shall see him*  
 “ *Face to Face*, says his Apostles, *and we shall*  
 “ *know him as we are known*. We shall know the  
 “ Power of the Father, the Wisdom of the Son,  
 “ the Goodness of the Holy Ghost; the indivi-  
 “ sible Nature of the Blessed Trinity. Now  
 “ this very *seeing the Face of God* is the Joy of  
 “ the Blessed Angels; their everlasting Delight,  
 “ their Crown of Honour, their Aim, and Rest,  
 “ their inward and outward Consolation, their  
 “ pleasurable Paradise, their Heavenly *Jerusa-*  
 “ *lem*, their fulness of Bliss, their eternal Tri-  
 Phil. 4. 7. “ umph, their precious *Peace of God which pass-*  
 “ *eth all understanding*. This is the complete Be-  
 “ atitude of Glorified Spirits; to behold him  
 “ that made Heaven and Earth, him that Crea-  
 “ ted thee, Redeemed thee, Glorified thee.  
 “ For, in seeing him, thou shalt know him; in  
 “ knowing him, thou shalt love him, in loving  
 “ him, thou shalt possess him, in possessing him,  
 “ thou shalt praise him; and in praising him  
 “ thou shalt employ thy whole Eternity. For  
 “ he is the inheritance of his People, the Feli-  
 “ city of his Chosen, the Reward of their Ex-  
 Gen. 15. 1. “ pectation. *I will be thy exceeding great Reward*,  
 “ says he to *Abraham*. O Lord thou art indeed  
 “ exceeding great in thy self, and therefore  
 “ thou

"thou mayst well be thy Servant's exceeding great Reward. The sight of thee then is all our Wages, all our Recompence, all the Joy and Felicity we can hope or have; for thou thyself hast said it, *This is Life Eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.* Joh. 17. 3.

SECT. III.

*Some Circumstances increasing the Joys of Heaven.*

HAVING thus observed, wherein our Happiness hereafter, as it relates to each part of us, does strictly and properly consist; it cannot surely be hard to conceive, that the Joy resulting from hence must needs be exceeding great, in that blessed Day when we shall be translated thither. Let us hear St. *Augustine* once more breathing out his Sense of it in those most affectionate Expressions. "O Joy, above all Joys, and without which there is no Joy! When shall I enter in-  
"to thee? When shall I possess thee, to see my  
"God, that dwelleth in thee? O everlasting  
"Kingdom! O Light Eternal! O Peace of God,  
"which passeth all Understanding! wherein the Souls  
"of Saints do rest with thee, O Lord; where everlasting gladness is upon their Heads, and Sorrow and  
"Pain are fled far from them! How glorious a  
"Kingdom is thine, my God and Saviour, where  
"every Servant of thine sits in State with thee,  
"decked with Light as with a Garment, and  
"crowned with Bliss as with precious Stones!  
"where thou thyself art present, the Hope of the  
"faithful, the Diadem of their everlasting Glo-  
"ry, filling every Sense with ravishing Comforts  
"by thy blessed Sight. In this Kingdom of thine,  
S "dearest

"dearest Lord, is Mirth without Sadness;  
 "Health without Sickness, Life without La-  
 "bour, Light without Darkness, Happiness  
 "without Abatement, Goodness without Evil,  
 "Youth that never waxeth old, Strength that  
 "never decayeth, Beauty that never fadeth,  
 "Love that never cooleth, Joy that never ceas-  
 "eth. Here Pain is never felt, Complaint ne-  
 "ver heard, matter of Grief never seen, Dis-  
 "asters and Disappointments never feared. And  
 "all, because they have the fruition of thee O  
 "Lord, who art the Fulness and Perfection of  
 "all Felicity! Would we, who live in these  
 Days, and read these zealous Meditations, em-  
 ploy our Thoughts as this holy Man did, we  
 should no doubt feel our selves more inflamed  
 with ardent Love, and impatient Desires, of  
 this heavenly Bliss; We should contend more  
 earnestly for the obtaining it, than now, alas!  
 we do.

Luke 21.

Now for the kindling these Affections in our  
 Souls, and quickning them up to some better  
 Sense of this Matter; let us consider a little,  
 how joyful a Day that will be with us, when,  
 after having finished our Course, and passed the  
 time of our Sojourning here in the fear of God,  
 Death shall translate us from Misery and Labour  
 to Life and Immortality; when, at that Hour,  
 which others tremble at the very Thought of,  
 we shall lift up our Heads in hope, because the  
 time of our Redemption draweth nigh: When the  
 Prison-doors shall be opened, and the Soul, shall  
 March out in Triumph; conducted by the  
 blessed Angels, to its Father's Mansions; and re-  
 ceived there by all those Orders of the Heaven-  
 ly Hierarchy mentioned in Scripture. All these  
 rejoiced at our conversion, and all shall assist  
 with

with Gladness at our Coronation. O! what a Day of Jubilee will that be to us, when we shall be presented in full Court before the Throne of the most High, with a recital of the Good we have cherfully done, and the Evils we have patiently suffer'd, for the Love and Service of Almighty God: When all our Virtuous Actions, all our Almes and Prayers, all our Watchings and Fastings, all our holy Labours for the Good of others, all our Patience and Charity in bearing and forgiving Injuries and Affronts, our constancy in Adversity, our Moderation in Prosperity, our Sobriety and Temperance, our Innocence and Purity, all shall be remembred, commended, rewarded; and not one Circumstance forgotten, which may tend to our Advantage! Shall we not then, think you, be convinced of the Wisdom of Godliness? that this is the great, the only true Gain? Shall we not then, ten Thousand times over, bless that happy Hour, when we resolved to break loose from the miserable Bondage of Sin, and the World, and bound our selves to that Service, which is perfect Freedom? Shall we not then think our selves most highly obliged by them, who shewed us the Errour of our Ways, and be thankful for those Admonitions, Reproofs, or Corrections, which brought us first to make that Resolution? Yes doubtless, Then we shall value the Ministers of God as they deserve, and be convinced, that they only were our true Friends, who would not flatter us in our Follies; and, that the Impatience and Uneasiness, which any Good Offices done to our selves were formerly entertain'd with, proceeded from our blindness and insensibility of our true Happiness: And that none ever loved us so well,

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well, as they, who rather than see us perish everlastingly, would venture to displease us, by bold but necessary Truths. But farther yet,

When we shall look behind us, and reflect, what a secure Haven we have at last put into; how many Storms and Dangers we have passed, in which others are still tossing, and in hazard of their Safety; our Satisfaction must needs receive great encrease by this comfortable Thought. Then shall we clearly discern the infinite Snares and Precipices we have got over; and how often we should certainly have perished in our Passage, had not the Hand of God sustain'd our Weakness, and rescued us from those Difficulties, which we were not of our selves a Match for. Then shall we see the doubtful Conflicts of them, who still survive the Death and Damnation, which many of our Friends and Acquaintance have plunged themselves into, the Howlings, and bitter Pains which they now lie in, whose Wit and Humour used once to make their company Merry. All which, compared with our own better Lot, shall raise our Sense and Value of it. Then, my Son for thy own part, thou mayest rest secure. There is no more need then of Fear, or Labour, or Care: No occasion for sleeping in Arms, but these may all be laid aside as useless; since thou hast no more Enemies to assault thee, no more crafty Serpent to beguile thee, no more treacherous Heart to betray thee, but all is Safety, Peace and Pleasure: Mortification and Abstinence, and chastising thy Body, and struggling with Difficulties, and Temptations, subduing of Passions, and conflicting with fleshly and sensual Appetites, have now had their perfect Work. There is a nobler and more delightful

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Exercise prepared to succeed in their stead. Rejoycing and Triumphing, and singing *Hallelujahs* to that Lamb, who shed his Blood to bring thee to this Blessedness, and will preserve thee in it to all Eternity.

Again, Think what transporting Comfort it will be, at that Day, to behold that holy Lamb, sitting in Majesty upon his Royal Throne. If the Three Wisemen came so far out of the East, and rejoyced exceedingly to see a speechless Infant, lying in a Manger, what a Satisfaction will it be to see this once Weak and Poor, this despised and crucified Jesus, triumphant over His, and Our Spiritual Enemies! If St. *John Baptist* leaped in his Mother's Womb, when this yet unborn Child approached him, what Raptures shall his glorious presence excite in his eternal Kingdom? "This (says St. *Augustin*)

"is the top of all that Happiness enjoyed by the  
"Saints in Heaven, to be admitted to the sight Serm. 27.  
de Sanct.  
"of Christ in his Glory, and to receive the  
"Beams of Glory shed abroad by the Splendor  
"of his Majesty. And, if we were to be af-  
"flicted every Day; nay to undergo the very  
"Torments of Hell for a Season, thus to be  
"numbred among the Saints in Glory everlast-  
"ing; thus to gain the Sight of, and be suffer-  
"ed to approach our Lord in Heaven, were a  
"Reward so valuable, that even those Pains  
"are to be esteemed as nothing in comparifon  
"of it. O! that we made the same just ac-  
count of this Blessedness! for there only wants  
a true estimate of our Priviledges hereafter,  
to prevent Men's living as they now do, and  
losing those inestimable Advantages, for such  
wretched Trifles in Exchange, as the Children  
of this World are sottishly content to barter  
them away for.



But still I have not done ( and indeed in this Argument it is not easy to make an end ): Ima-  
gin then once more, what a Pleasure it shall be  
at that Day, to meet with all thy old Friends,  
who are received into that blessed Peace: Thy  
Father, thy Mother, thy Husband or Wife,  
thy Brothers and Sisters, thy Kindred, and  
Neighbours, thy intimate Acquaintance, and  
most beloved Companions : O ! the Mirth, the  
mutual Welcomes, the sweet Embraces, that  
shall be there upon this Occasion ! All which  
St. *Cyprian* hath very piously exprest ? “ Who is  
“ there ( says he ) that after a long and peril-  
“ lous Voyage is not transported, with the ve-  
“ ry Thought of returning to his own Country  
“ and old Friends ? Now Heaven ( my Christian  
“ Brethen ) is our own Country ; and the In-  
“ habitants of that blessed Place, are our Friends  
“ and Relations : How comes it then to pass, that  
“ we are not more eager to meet and Embrace  
“ them ? In Heaven we have Parents, and Chil-  
“ dren, and Kinsmen, without number, at di-  
“ stant Removes, those that have sprung from us,  
“ and those from whom we have sprung, whom  
“ here we never knew : There we may have  
“ many Acquaintance and dear Friends, wishing  
“ and waiting for our safe Arrival. What a  
“ Satisfaction will it be to them and us, to meet,  
“ and embrace, and solace our selves together ?  
“ How incomparably sweet will the Delight be,  
“ to have met once again, never to part any  
“ more ? to enjoy each other, and Love and  
“ Reign together, where Eternity of Life shall  
“ receive no allay from any fear of Death.  
This Satisfaction too, great as it is, shall yet be  
continually increased, by the daily fresh Arrival  
of new Kindred and Friends, bringing along with  
them

them the Spoils of their Enemies vanquished in their Conflicts, during this mortal Life: And what a comfortable Sight will it be to see those Seats of fallen Angels supplied with new Recruits of Men; to observe the Crowns of Glory upon their Heads, in a beautiful Variety, proportionable to the Quality of their Combats and their Conquests? Some for Martyrdom and Constancy under Persecution, others for Mortification and Chastity, others for Poverty and Patience, others for Humility and Meekness; All, according to the different sorts of Victory, obtained by them in the Flesh. And among all other Subjects of rejoicing, that sure, where Charity and Good-nature are in their utmost Perfection, cannot be the least; To see the Raptures, the Astonishment of those who are translated thither from the Miseries of this wretched Life; how they exult, and are even lost in Admiration, at the happy Change, and exceeding great Honour, conferred upon them.

Let us suppose a poor Traveller, who had lost his Way, wandering in a deep miry Bog, in a dark tempestuous Night, far from Shelter, terrified with Thunder and Lightning, wet to the Skin, benumb'd with Cold, destitute of Money, spent with Toils, famish'd with Hunger, burnt up with Thirst, driven to Despair with the forest complication of Miseries, that can possibly meet together: Let us, I say, suppose this weary, desolate, despairing Man, brought in the twinkling of an Eye, to a stately Palace, where every thing is provided, that can Refresh or Delight him. All this prepared for his Entertainment, and only waiting for his Coming, the Servants and Courtiers in readiness

to receive and bid him welcome, to Serve and Honour him, nay to Crown him a King ; What sort of Behaviour, what Affections, what inexpressible change of Temper must this surprising Alteration create ? What could he say ? or rather, Could he say any Thing ? Would not excess of Joy strike him Dumb, and his Heart expand it self, even till it burst, with the greatness of a Pleasure, too strong and great to be obtained. Now all this, and much more, will be the Case of those happy Souls, who, from the Troubles of this Life, make their escape to Heaven. No Refreshment, no satisfaction of Sense is able to give us any tolerable Idea of it. But, O ! that we would labour to conceive as much of it as we may ; that we would strike the Impression deep upon our Hearts, to draw us off from the empty Bubbles of this World, and engage our Affections to the substantial Happiness of the next ! Had we but a worthy Opinion of this Reward, we could not be so cold in our Pursuits of it. Were we such wise Merchants, as the Saints of old, we should bid as boldly for this Pearl of great Price, as they did. We should, after our great Leader's Example, *endure the Cross for the Joy that is set before us* ; and, in obedience to his Advice, *Go and sell all we have, and buy this hidden Treasure*. We should with St. Paul, *count all but Dross and Dung so we may win Christ* : and cry out with Ignatius, *Fire, Gibbets, Wild Beasts, breaking my Bones, cutting my Body to Pieces, all the Torments, that the Malice of Men or Devils can inflict, are welcome, so I may, by their Means, attain to the Kingdom of Heaven*. Blessed God ! How different Notions had these Saints from ours ? Who can think it strange after this, that the Friendship of this World

Mat. 13.

Hieron.  
in Catal.

World should be enmity with God, and the Wisdom of God reputed Foolishness by the World? Oh wretched Men, how long will ye love Vanity, and follow after Deceit! Why do you refuse and despise Gold, and at the same time toil for Chaff and Straw? Chaff and Straw indeed, such as is not only vile in it self, but will at last set your Houses on Fire, and prove your irreparable, your eternal, Undoing.

## SECT. IV.

*Of the Christian's Title to this Reward.*

IT only now remains, that I exhort every Christian to consider, what he is born to, and may certainly attain, provided he be not wanting to himself. By virtue then of his Second and Spiritual Birth, he is Heir apparent to the Kingdom of Heaven, a Kingdom Infinite, Blissful, and Eternal; the Kingdom of Almighty God himself. He is made a Joynt-Heir with *Jesus Christ* the Son of God, to reign, and triumph, and sit in Judgment with him; And could he be more, except it were to be made God himself? All the Riches and Glory that Heaven contains, shall be bestowed to make him happy. And who would not value this Inheritance? Who would not be at some Pains to gain it? especially when assured, that our Labour shall not be in vain in the Lord; but even the meanest and most miserable Man upon Earth, may, if he please exalt himself to this royal Dignity? Why then should we slight our own Mercy and Happiness? Why should we not make this wise Bargain, when dealing with one who neither will, nor can, deceive us?

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Nothing can be a greater Grief to him that dyed for us, than that we should not reap the Benefits of his death: Nothing more ungrateful to him who offers so vast a Treasure at so reasonable a Price, than that we should purchase the pains of Hell, at a greater Expence, than Heaven and eternal Joys with good Management would cost us. O Incredible Liberality in the kind Offerer! O most unaccountable Madness and Folly in the obstinate Refuser!

Follow not then the Frenzy and dotage of worldly Wisdom, nor partake with the Wicked in this fatal Errour. For the Day will come when they shall dearly repent, and smart for their perverseness; and thou shalt esteem thy self most happy in dissenting from them. Let them squander away their precious time in Vanities, the sinful and fugitive Delights of this perishing Life; let them build stately Palaces, aspire greedily after Honours; lay Field to Field, and heap up thick Clay; This is all but building Castles in the Air, and their short, false appearances of Happiness are not worth thy Envy. If they disparage the Riches of God, and the Honour of his Saints at present, and cannot entertain any lofty Ideas of that Happiness, in which carnal Pleasures have no part, marvel not at the matter; for these Things are not of a size with their Capacities, nor suited to their depraved Affections. A Horse can have no Notion of any Entertainment above Provender and Water; and the sensual Man, who, in this respect hath degenerated into Brute, can as little understand the Things that be of God. But thou hast been taught to raise thy Thoughts up to loftier Matters, and the only Qualification, farther needful, is to endeavour after them.

For

For it must always be remembred, that this Kingdom of God is never to be found of them that seek it not. It is the Prize at the Goal; but the Prize is only for them that run. It is the Crown of Glory, but none can be crown'd, except such as fight. Observe the Condition propos'd by the Master of the Combat, *Not every one that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but he that doeth the Will of my Father which is in Heaven.* Mat. 7. 21. 2 Tim. 11. This Kingdom is offer'd to all; but they who are content to suffer with Christ are the Persons that shall reign with him. Consider then the greatness of this Treasure, but consider it so, as not to mistake the Methods of obtaining it; and this can only be by a Virtuous and Godly Life. Sit down then, and, according to our Lord's Advice compute the Cost, whether thou have the Heart, and the Purse, to buy this Pearl of great Price; whether Strength sufficient to engage in this War or no. My meaning is, Whether thou art stedfastly resolv'd, and fully determin'd, to get Heaven at any rate, and think it a Good Bargain upon the Terms of forsaking all Sin, and leading a godly, righteous and sober Life in this present World. This is the single Point upon which thy Success will turn at last. And all the former Chapters, are intended for this very Purpose, that thou shouldst take right Measures, answer the end of thy Creation, and firmly set thy self not to lose that by Negligence, which can never be retriev'd, and which, if thou do lose, Ten Thousand times better were it for thee that thou hadst never been Born.

If then the Love of God, if the Love of thy Self, have any Power, to influence thy Will,  
shake

shake off that dangerous Security, with which Flesh and Blood so frequently stupifies Worldly and sensual Minds. Have regard to thy future and everlasting State, and whatever becomes of this Transitory one, resolve to secure that. Consider, that Eternity depends on this short Moment; and if our Life be but a Moment, and yet a Moment of such vast Importance, think what a madness it is, to trifle it away in an unthinking careless way of Living. Thou canst not want Remembrancers of thy Duty. All the Creatures of Earth, and Heaven, and Hell, are Motives, are Books, are Sermons and Exhortations to thee, some by their Glory, some by their Punishment, some by their Beauty, all by their Creation; they loudly and with one Voice declare, that thou wert not sent into the World for nothing; that thou art bound to do the Works of him that sent thee; that all is Vanity, and Folly, and Misery, except only the Service of thy Lord and Master. And with this Admonition, I will conclude this First Part of my Treatise; reserving for the Second, my Answers to some Objections and Impediments, usually alledged in Bar to this Holy Resolution. In the mean while, I most heartily beseech our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who did not disdain to shed his own most precious Blood for the purchasing this Inheritance and Kingdom for us; that he would be pleased to give us his Grace, that so we may value it as it deserves, and labour for it so zealously, so successfully, that the Observation of the Wiseman be not laid to our Charge at the last Day, nor we reproached with having *so noble a Price put into the Hands of Fools in vain, seeing we had not the Heart to use it.*

Prov. 17.  
16.

A  
T R E A T I S E

Concerning  
Holy Resolution.

P A R T II.

Introduction.

**I**N the former Part of this Book, I have proposed to my Reader several mighty Considerations, in order to excite in him a firm Resolution of serving God. And, in regard that very Service is perfect Freedom, and the very nature of Virtue, such as attract the Love and Admiration of reasonable and unprejudic'd Minds, I might hope, that this, back'd with the Inducements already mentioned, would be sufficient, effectually to win Men to Goodness; were it not, that we have a subtle and dangerous Enemy to deal with. One, who, even after our Judgments are convinced, does not give up the Cause, but finds Means oftentimes to seduce our Wills, and hinder our choosing those Methods, which yet we are very sensible are fittest to be taken. Thus, when the Excellency of heavenly and spiritual Wisdom shines in upon our Understandings in its brightest lustre, and discovers the Vanities of a Sinful,  
and



and the Advantages of a Godly Life : This cunning Adversary dissuades such a Change, either by representing the difficulty of obtaining Pardon for our past Sins ; or by magnifying the hardships of Virtue and Piety ; or by affrighting us with the loss of the Pleasures and Advantages of this present Life ; Or by some other trifling Delusion ; which though of no real Weight in it self, yet, falling in with the Inclinations and Infirmities of our present State, seems in the partial Eye of Flesh and Blood, to carry a great deal in it. Thus he labours either wholly to divert, and drive us from our good Resolution, or else to keep it off and hold us in suspense, and either way, if he succeed, his purpose of ruining us takes effect. Now, For the better preventing these subtle and malicious Attempts, my Design is, in the following Chapters, to consider the principal Hindrances, which use to keep Men off from this necessary Undertaking ; and I hope so to detect the Sophistry of those vain pretences, as to bring Men to a right Sense of their own Condition, and to arm them against the treacherous Insinuations of their Spiritual Adversary. For I am much inclined to promise my self, that the Matters treated of here, may with careful Perusal, and sincere Application, contribute greatly to the Profit and Satisfaction of my Readers, and both confirm and comfort them in their Good Intentions of advancing and persevering to the End, in those Ways, which the former Part, I would fain presume, hath satisfied them, are undoubtedly the right, the only, Paths to Happiness.

## C H A P. I.

*Of the First Obstruction to Holy Resolution. Distrust of God's Mercy upon the account of the Greatness, or Number, of our Sins.*

**A**S One of the most powerful Seducements to Sin, is presuming upon Mercy and Pardon, so one of the most dangerous Temptations to continuing in a sinful Course, is a distrust of God's Mercy, and despair of that Pardon. A most uncomfortable State of Mind, to which the Devil labours to drive Men, when their Consciences reproach them, and they feel a dead weight of Guilt lie heavy upon their Minds. Such was the Case of *Cain*, who, upon the Murder of his Brother, and a Sense of that Vengeance, for which that Blood cryed loud against him, broke out into that horrid complaint *my Iniquity is greater than can be forgiven*. Such that of *Judas*, who, declaring his Sin in betraying his innocent Master, found no other course of redressing the Misery he lay under, than that of destroying himself for Grief. A Refuge more displeasing, more injurious, to that merciful Saviour he had betrayed, than even that Treachery was, which delivered him up into the Hands of those Enemies, who sought his Life. Upon this Rock sometimes God suffers wicked Souls to suffer Shipwrack; and leaves them to all the Terrours of his Threatnings, and their own Wickedness: So in his just Judgment punishing one Sin with another.

And

Gen 4.  
Mat. 27.

And wretched indeed is the Condition of such hardned Wretches; for this Despair plunges them into all manner of Evil; it stops the Influences of Divine Grace, and cuts in sunder those Cords of Love, by which God draws Men to himself; It represents Repentance and Amendment, as remedies that come too late, and cannot be applyed with any Effect, and abandons the Sinner to the commission of all Uncleanness with Greediness.

Now nothing can be a higher Provocation, than to offend upon this Principle, because it robs God of that beloved Attribute, in which he principally delights; his boundless Mercy and Goodness; It represents him to be a Powerful Being, but withal Implacable and Fierce; such as takes pleasure in the Destruction of his Creatures, and is not to be appeased with any, though never so sincere and deep, Sorrow for Offences passed. It were easy to shew the ill Consequences of this Disposition, and how heinously God resents it, how solemnly he disclaims the Ground on which it proceeds, from sundry passages of Holy Writ. But, at present, I shall content my self with Instancing in Two only.

Jer. 18.

The First is, That of *Jeremiah*, not long before the *Babylonish* Captivity, when the People, terrified with their own grievous Sins, and the dreadful Punishments denounced against them, resolved not to quit their former Abominations, upon this impious Thought, that Reformation could be no Advantage to them. *They said, There is no hope, but we will walk after our own Devices, and we will every one do the Imagination of his Evil Heart.* Whereupon God upbraids them with a Degree of Impiety, worse than even the

## The First Obstruction to a Holy Resolution. 255

Pagan World had been guilty of. *Ask ye now among the Heathen, who hath heard such Things?* And for their better Information in this Matter, he explains to them the Nature of his Proceedings, and the true Importance of his Threatnings, by the Parable of a Potter framing a Vessel that had been spoiled under his Hands, into another Vessel, according as the Stuff would bear, and his own Prudence directed. The Application of which Parable there, is as follows. *O House of Israel! Cannot I do with you as this Potter? saith the Lord; that is, keep you from being utterly lost and of no use at all? Behold! as the Clay is in the Potter's Hand, so are ye in my Hand, O House of Israel. At what time I shall speak concerning a Nation, and concerning a Kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; If that Nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their Evil; I will repent of the Evil that I thought to do unto them.* And then, in the following parts of that Chapter, he expresses his just Indignation against such unreasonable Men, as look upon their Case to be past remedy; and suppose the Threatnings issued out on purpose to drive them to Amendment, impossible to be escaped, even though they should amend; and imagin the God and Creatour of Men, a Being never to be appeased, and a Hater of the Work of his own Hands.

The Second Instance is of the same People Ezek. 33: again, at another time, and under the Instruction of another Prophet. They languished under their Afflictions, during the time of their Exile, and laboured under sad Apprehensions of more and greater Miseries, which discouraged them from a Change of their former wicked Courses. Thus they spoke, saying, *If our Transgressions and*

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11. 12.

our Sins be upon us, and we pine away in them, how then should we live? For the taking off this Objection, God sends the Prophet Ezekiel to them, with this supporting Message: *As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the Wicked, but that the Wicked turn from his way and live; turn ye, turn ye from your evil Ways, for why will ye die, O House of Israel? When I say unto the Wicked, thou shalt surely die; if he turn from his Sin, and do that which is lawful and right: None of his Sins that he hath committed shall be mentioned against him; he hath done that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live.* Now, though this might suffice to remove this first Obstruction, by proving, that, even the most express Sentence of Death and Damnation shall not take place against those, who improve the Consideration of their Danger, into an Occasion of serious and effectual Reformation of Manners; and consequently that none have Reason to distrust of Mercy, but they only who will not qualify themselves for it by amendment of Life: Yet, for the clearer Evidence of this Matter, and the greater Comfort of those, who are oppressed with the heavy Burden of their Sins; I shall choose to enlarge a little upon this Subject, and shew, that no Time, no State, no Age, no degree of Guilt, is excluded from the Mercy of God, provided Men do truly and in good earnest Repent. That, consequently all, without exception, may apply to themselves that promise, *Turn ye, and ye shall live.* And this is what I hope to make good in the following Particulars.

SECT. I.

*The Nature of God's Love to Mankind.*

First then, we may form to our selves a just Idea of this Mercy and readiness to forgive, by the incomprehensible Love of God to Mankind. For, Love will always dispose the Person affected with it, to spare and pardon the Faults and Failings of the Party beloved, in proportion as he is dear to the Person so offended. What this Love of God is in it self, we are not indeed able to conceive, but we may reasonably conjecture the Greatness of the Cause, from the Greatness of it's Effects; and judge of the Depth of the Fountain, by the Streams which we see flow from it. Now the proper effects of Love are Good Offices and Acts of Kindness and Compassion, and what inestimable, what infinite Demonstrations of this kind God hath been pleased to give us, hath been already declared at large. The whole Frame of the World and all his Proceedings with Man, are so many undeniable Evidences of it. And therefore where the Rivers are so deep, and wide, it must needs follow, that the Spring from whence, they take their rise, is inexhaustible, unmeasurable, and far surpassing the compass of any humane, or finite, Understanding.

If it be enquired, what should move Almighty God to be so very kindly affected towards Man, I own my self incapable of giving any sufficient account of it on our Part, and rather choose, with Holy Men in Scripture, to stand amazed at the Marvellous Condescension. The more we reflect upon his Majesty, and our

Wisd. 11.  
24, 26.

Ezek. 18.

own Vileness, the greater still must needs be our Wonder and Astonishment. But yet some Light into this Matter is given us by Wise and Good Men. *Thou lovest all the Things that are*, says Solomon, *and abhorrest nothing, which thou hast made; for never wouldst thou have made any Thing if thou hadst hated it. Therefore thou sparest all, because they are thine, O Lord thou Lover of Souls.* And, that This is a very just Inference, God himself hath informed us, by laying it as the Ground of his solemn Protestations, that he hath no pleasure in the death of a Sinner, that *all Souls are his*; Intimating hereby, that it is contrary to all Reason and Equity, to suppose him delighted with the Destruction and Misery, of that to which himself gave Being. Thus we see it is in Nature, that every Man hath a more than ordinary Tenderness, for those Things which derive themselves from him. The very Houses of our own Building, the very Trees of our own Planting, give us a more sensible Delight, and we are more concerned for their Preservation, than we feel for others, ready provided to our Hands. We are apt to look upon these, as, in some sense, a part of our selves, and the same Propensity, which inclines us to love our selves, does in proportion extend our Care and Affection to whatever is of our own making.

Psal. 80.  
8, 14, 15

Hence David recommending his People to God's kind Protection, thought it a very forcible Argument, to move his commiseration of their Sufferings, when he prayed thus, *Thou hast brought a Vine out of Egypt, thou hast cast out the Heathen, and Planted it. Return we beseech thee, O God of Hosts, look down from Heaven, behold and visit this Vine, And the Vineyard which*  
thy

thy own Right Hand hath planted, and the Branch that thou madest strong for thy self. And *Isaiab*, But now, O Lord, we are the Clay, and thou our *Isa. 64, 8, 9.* Potter, and we all are the Work of thy Hand. Be not wroth very sore, O Lord, neither remember Iniquity for ever; behold, see, we beseech thee, we are all thy People. And *Job* in the bitterness of his Affliction. Remember, I beseech thee, that thou hast made me as the Clay, and wilt thou bring me into *Job. 10. 9, 10, 11, 12, 13.* Dust again? Hast thou not poured me out as Milk, and cruddled me like Cheese? Thou hast clothed me with Skin and Flesh, and hast fenced me with Bones and Sinews. Thou hast granted me Life and Favour, and thy Visitation hath preserved my Spirit. And these Things hast thou hid in thy Heart, I know that this is with thee. By which Words this Holy Man plainly signifies, that, though God suffered him to be afflicted to such a Degree, as might almost tempt him to suspect, that he had forgotten him, yet he was well assured, that his Goodness could not possibly forsake, or despise, one, who was his own Creature and Workmanship. Such a piece of Workmanship, especially, as was framed upon the Model, and after the Resemblance, of the Excellent and Almighty Artificer himself. And this very Consideration supported *David*, under the sense, not of his Adversities and Sufferings only, but of his Sins and Infirmities too; that God, who made him, and understood him thoroughly, and saw the Temper of those brittle Materials, of which he was compounded. That He, who understood this, would not fail to look graciously upon the Frailties and Necessities of human Nature, and to pass by any the most grievous Offences, which these had betrayed him into. For here he lays the stress of his Hope and



Pfal. 103.  
11, 12, 13,  
14.

comfortable assurance of Pardon, *Look how far distant the East is from the West, so far hath he removed our Transgressions from us. As high also as the Heaven is above the Earth, so great is his Mercy toward them that fear him. Like as a Father pitieth his own Children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our Frame, he remembereth that we are but Dust.*

From this reasoning of *David*, we may infer another Ground for hope of Pardon; nay even for Assurance of being kindly received, when we turn to God; which is, that this Creatour of all things in common is, to Mankind in particular, a Father, a Title of Love and Tenderness, the greatest of any in the World, inso-much that the Philosopher observed very truly, that no Man could conceive the Affection of a Parent, who was not one himself. Hence our blessed Saviour, to keep us mindful of this tender Regard, and provoke us to returns of Duty and filial Trust, does as it were, to kindle one fire at another, very frequently make use of this Title in his Divine Discourses. Thus we are commanded to forgive and treat them well, who use us ill, that we may be the *Children* of our *Father*, who makes his Sun to shine, and his Rain to fall on the Just, and on the Unjust. We must be *Perfect and Merciful, because our Father in Heaven is so*. We are dissuaded from anxious Care, and immoderate Concern, for the Things of this World, because *our Heavenly Father knows that we have need of all these Things*. The force of which evidently lies here, that since God not only knows our Wants, but is our Father too; As the former Consideration infers his Ability, so the latter will not fail to engage his Inclination. A Father's Heart cannot be with-

Mat. 5. 45,  
48.

Chap. 6.

without provident Care for his Children, nor see them want those Necessaries, which it is in his Power to supply them with. And this our Lord confirms to us yet more, by instancing in the abundant Provision made for the Birds of the Air, the Flowers of the Field, and other Creatures, far less excellent, and of less esteem in God's Sight: So that, if he be not wanting in his Care for Them, much less will he be so to Us, who are much dearer to him, than any other of his Creatures in this lower World.

These Arguments have all the Relation of a Father for their proper Foundation, and they receive yet more Strength, from his being our Heavenly Father. One who in this kindness and paternal Affection exceeds all earthly Parents; as much as Infinite and Perfect is above Frail and Finite; as much as the Power and Clemency, and Goodness of Almighty God surpasses the infirmity of his worst and feeblest Creatures. A Father, who did not only impart Life and Being to his Children, but hath poured into their Hearts that yet more precious Gift, the Spirit of his own Divine eternal Son: by this, Gal. 4. stirring them up to Hope and Confidence in his paternal Goodness and Protection. And in Virtue of this Confidence, not only Saints, but Sinners, have fled to, and been kindly received by, him. So the Prophet *Isaiah*, in the Name of his disobedient People, made no difficulty to address himself; *Doubtless thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not; Thou, O Lord, art our Father.* Isa. 63. 16. And our blessed Saviour, after his Resurrection, sent that most comfortable Message to his Disciples, *Go and tell my Brethren, I ascend to my Father, and your Father, to my God and your God.*

God. Thus, by these two Relations, the one importing infinite Power, the other infinite Love, taking away all distrust of succeeding; as oft as we shall have recourse to this God always able, to this Father always ready, and most willing to help us.

- Thus God himself, after many Threatnings denounced by the Prophet *Jeremy* against *Israel*, for their Sins; lest these should drive them to despair, changes his Style, and assures them of his Favour, provided they sincerely turn to him; telling them that he had *loved them with an everlasting Love*, and *drawn them with Kindness*; that even his Threatnings and Punishments were Instruments of Mercy, and that they should be refreshed after their Afflictions, and gathered from their Dispersion, because I (says he) *am a Father to Israel, and Ephraim is my first-born*. And, a little after, to the rebellious Kingdom of *Samaria*, which was to receive Mercy, he delivers himself in these affectionate Terms: *Is Ephraim my dear Son? is he a pleasant Child? for since I speak against him, I do earnestly remember him still. Therefore my Bowels are troubled for him, I will surely have Mercy upon him, saith the Lord*. These are the Bowels of Compassion so emphatically mentioned by *Zacharias*, to incline God in favour of Mankind, who had offended him. That true and tender Commiseration of the Father in the Parable, whom, though his Prodigal Son had not only displeased, but utterly abandoned, though he had spent all his Substance in riotous and most scandalous Courses, and reduced himself to the last Degree of Misery, by his wicked Life, yet, upon his return Home, he was so far from disdain-  
ing to receive him, that he ran to meet him  
with
- Jer. 31. 4.  
9.
- V. 20.
- Luk. 1. 77.
- Luk. 15.

with open Arms, welcom'd and kiss'd him, adorn'd him with the best Robe, made a solemn Feast, invited his Friends to rejoyce with him upon this Occasion, and express'd a much more sensible Satisfaction in his return, than if he had never gone away, or deserv'd ill from him at all.

By all which figurative Representations the Blessed Jesus intended to give us a true Notion of our Heavenly Father's incomprehensible love and Pity to relenting Sinners, when they come back to their Duty. With regard to which, he is called by the Apostles, *The Father of Mercies*, because this boundless Ocean of Mercies flows in a peculiar manner from the tender Disposition of a Father. Which cannot so properly be said of his Judgments; and therefore he is never called the *Father*, but the *God* of Justice, and Vengeance. In short, This blessed Name of Father denotes all the Sweetness and Love, all the Friendship and Comfort, all the Care and Protection, all the readiness to forgive, all the earnest desire to save his Children from Ruine, that we can possibly suppose belonging to that Relation. Nay, to give us the utmost assurance of Kindness, God does not suffer us to entertain Thoughts of him so mean, as that, any the most soft and tender Resentments of the most affectionate Parent upon Earth, can equal or come near to his. *Can a Woman forget her suckling Child, that she should not have compassion on the Fruit of her Womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will not I forget thee, saith the Lord.* So short of God's Kindness, is even a Mother's Love; so great assurance of Grace and forgiveness may we Children promise ourselves, from God being our Father.

But still we have a greater demonstration of this Love behind, than either of the former.

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- An Evidence beyond all Parallel, and that, which alone would suffice to convince us, that God is most graciously and kindly disposed toward us. Thus we find it represented in St. *Joh. 3.16.* *John, So God loved the World, that he gave his only begotten Son, so the end that all that believe in him should not perish but should have everlasting Life.* This Redemption then, when we were in a lost Condition, is a most irrefragable Proof of God's great Kindness. For what are we, that so precious a Ransom should be paid down for us, as the Life and Blood of his Eternal and only begotten Son? And how can we suppose, that he would have thought our safety worth purchasing at so dear a Rate, had he not loved us above all measure? Nay, how exceeding abundant was this Goodness, which proceeded from his own mere Motion, without any motive on our part? For thus we are taught by *1 Joh. 4.9.* *the same Apostle, Herein is Love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our Sins.* I said it had no Motive on our part; But that is not all. For we had laid the greatest Bar that could be to obstruct it, and provoked God to be angry irreconcilably, and to cast us off for ever. And therefore here is the very Perfection of Goodness, that notwithstanding all our Provocations, so much should be done to rescue us from Ruine. *Rom. 5 8.* *In this God commendeth his Love toward us, that while we were yet Sinners, Christ dyed for us.* And, in another place, the same Apostle makes the greatness of this Mercy the Measure of God's abundant Love, *Eph. 1.4,* *God (says he) who is rich in Mercy, for the great Love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in Trespasses and Sins, hath quickned us together with Christ, and hath raised us*

up together, and made us ſit together, in heavenly places in Chriſt Jeſus; That in the Ages to come he might ſhew the exceeding, Riches of his Grace in his Kindneſs toward us, through Jeſus Chriſt.

This is the conſtant ſtrain of the New-Teſtament. And, What Inferences can we better draw from it, than thoſe, which we find ready drawn to our Hands by St. Paul? *He that ſpared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how ſhall he not with him alſo freely give us all Things?* And again, *If, when we were Enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being juſtified we ſhall be ſaved from Wrath, and thus reconciled, we ſhall be ſaved by his Life.* He, who thought us worth ransoming at ſo dear a Price, now that he hath made us his own by Redemption, what ſhall he not do for us? How can we ſuppoſe, he will not receive us, when our Salvation ſhall coſt him no more than a kind look; which in compariſon of what he hath done in our behalf already, is not ſo much as one Drop of Water, compared to the huge and bottomleſs Ocean? And this may ſuffice for the *Fiſt* Branch of my Argument, conſiſting in the comfortable Aſſurance, which Sinners may have of his Kindneſs and readineſs to forgive, as he is their *Creator*, their *Father*, and their *Redeemer*.

## SECT II.

*How tenderly God expreſſes himſelf to Sinners in Scripture.*

**I** Proceed in the next place, to conſider thoſe kind Declarations, which Almighty God hath made of his readineſs to receive returning Penitents

Wisd. 12.

tents, and the Methods of his proceeding in order to their Conversion and Salvation. The Wise Man introduces him, conniving at the Sins of Men for a Time, and holding his Hand from Punishment, to give them space and leisure for second and better Thoughts: And, when by their Neglect, of these gentler Methods have no influence upon them, for their Reformation, but such abuse of Mercy does, as it were, extort severity from his provoked Justice: He then proceeds gradually, and by such Steps as are most likely to have a good Effect upon them. *Thou chastenest them* (says the same Author) *by little and little, and warnest them by putting them in remembrance, wherein they have offended; that, leaving their Wickedness, they may believe in thee, O Lord.*

Isa. 30. 18.

Now these Two Instance are plain Evidences of great Goodness in Almighty God. *First*, To wink at Man's Wickedness, and with unspeakable Patience and Long-suffering, to expect their amendment; according to that of the Prophet *Isaiah*, *Therefore will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have Mercy upon you.* And then in pursuance of the same kind Intentions, when it cannot consist with the Methods of his Government, to suffer their Transgressions to pass any longer uncorrected, so to moderate and temper his Justice with Mildness and Mercy, as always, in this Life, to reserve a place for Pardon and Amendment, and not to cut off those Offenders utterly, whom he finds it necessary to chastise.

To these Two Instances we may add another; yet more wonderful than the former. Which is, that he, who is the injured and offended Party, does yet make the first Advances towards

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Reconciliation : And, though in Equity he might take Revenge at his Pleaſure, and deny us pardon, even when we ſeek it moſt importunately ; yet does he in moſt amazing Condeſcenſion, offer us Peace of his own accord ; nay, he humbles himſelf ſo low, as to intreat, and court us, that we will accept his Friendſhip, and our Safety. Thus the Majeſty of the great God ſtroops to the Vileneſs of his moſt unworthy Creatures ; and the Prince and Lord of the whole World takes upon him the part of the meaneſt Slave. He makes his Addreſs to us, as if we could deſerve his Love, or were in ſome Degree neceſſary and advantagious to him, to him I ſay, whoſe abſolute and perfect Happineſs cannot poſſibly receive any Addition from the moſt excellent Works of his own Hands.

The many Examples of God's dealing with his People the Jews, are a manifeſt Proof of this. And thoſe many kind Expoſtulations, where he ſollicits *Jeruſalem's* Conversion, with a moſt affectionate earneſtneſs. The Prophet *Iſaiah*, in particular, will furniſh us with In- *Iſa. 42, 43* ſtances, of Entreaties ſo preſſing, Complaints ſo moving, Conferences ſo friendly, Proffers of Pardon ſo free, Suſpenſions of Punishment ſo relenting, Teſtimonies of Love ſo unfeigned, Leagues of Amity ſo firm ; that whoſoever ſhall read and conſider them, muſt needs confeſs with *David*, that the Lord is gracious, and his Mercy is over all his Works. And the like we find in that Prophecy of *Jeremiah* ; which foretells indeed the Rejection and Exile of that People. But yet in ſuch Terms, that, even after this dreadful Reſolution was taken, and the time of Execution drew near, his Bowels yearned over thoſe obdurate Sinners, and the Prophet



phet is ſent to warn them, again and again, of  
 Jer. 7. 2, 3. their approaching ruine. Yet now hear the Word  
 of the Lord, all ye of Judah, that enter in at theſe  
 Gates, thus ſaith the Lord of Hoſts, the God of Is-  
 rael, amend your Ways and your Doings, and I will  
 cauſe you to dwell in this place; But when theſe  
 Promiſes had no effect, then God proceeds by  
 Threatnings to fright them into their Duty. Do  
 #9, 20. they provoke me to anger ſaith the Lord? do they not  
 provoke themſelves to the Confuſion of their own Fa-  
 ces? Therefore thus ſaith the Lord God, Behold,  
 my Anger and my Fury ſhall be poured out upon this  
 place, upon Man, and upon Beaſt, and upon the  
 Trees of the Field, and upon the Fruit of the Ground,  
 and it ſhall burn and ſhall not be quenched. And  
 33. the Carcaſes of this People ſhall be Meat for the Fowls  
 of the Heaven, and for the Beaſts of the Earth.  
 Chap. 8. 1. The Enemy ſhall come, and ſhall bring out the  
 Bones of the Kings of Judah, and the Bones of the  
 Priests, and the Bones of the Prophets, and the Bones  
 3, 4, 5. of the Inhabitants of Jeruſalem out of their Graves.  
 And Death ſhall be choſen rather than Life, by the  
 reſidue of this evil Family in all the places, whither I  
 have driven them. And yet ſtill, God puts not  
 off all his tender Relentings, for thus it follows,  
 Shall they fall, and not riſe? Shall he turn away and  
 not return? Why then is this People of Jeruſalem  
 ſlidend back, with a perpetual backſliding?

By theſe and infinite other means of Mercy  
 God long contended with that hardned People,  
 and laboured hard to gain them to himſelf.  
 And, when thoſe had no ſucceſs, he ſuffered  
 Captivity and Deſolation to fall upon them.  
 Nor does he even then give them up utterly,  
 but in that State of Miſery and Bondage, pro-  
 miſes to forget all their former Obſtinacy, and  
 ſtill to be gracious, and to reſtore them again,  
 pro-

provided they would, though late, bethink themselves, and repent, and accept the Mercy then tendered to them.

And is it poſſible for any Man, who reflects at all upon this manner of Proceeding, to deſpair of Pardon upon return and ſerious Amendment! Suppoſing his Offences to be never ſo grievous, yet can they not exceed thoſe of the Jews; whom God in his indignation brands with the reproachful Titles, of *rebellious, impudent, and ſtif-hearted*, a People loſt to all Shame, and of an incorrigible diſpoſition. And yet what variety of excellent Arts, and Holy Importunities, were employed to procure this People's Amendment? Nay, For our farther Comfort and Encouragement, I muſt add one moſt remarkable Paſſage more from this Example, which indeed is ſo high an exceſs of Goodneſs, that no human Imagination could ever have apprehended it, no Reaſon could have rendred it probable, or credible, had not God, who is Truth it ſelf declared, that ſo it is. Thoſe Promiſes I mean, made to Sinners, that if they do truly and earneſtly repent, God will not only blot all their paſt Iniquities out of his Remembrance; but even rejoyce in their Conversion, and receive and cheriſh them with greater tenderneſs, than if they had never forſaken and departed from him at all. This is the true Importance of that kind Meſſage by *Iſaiah*, *Comfort ye my People, ſpeak comfortably to Jeruſalem, and ſay unto her, that her warfare is accompliſhed, that her Iniquity is pardoned, for ſhe hath received of the Lord's Hand double for all her Sins*: And again, deſcribing the Happineſs of their being reſtored to favour, *The Light of the Moon ſhall be as the Light of the Sun, and the Light*

Ezek. 2.

Iſa. II. 1.

Iſa. 30. 26.  
of

*of the Sun shall be sevenfold, as the Light of seven Days; in the Day that the Lord bindeth up the breach of his People, and healeth the stroke of their Wound.* What God thus promises to his People the Jews, we are well assured, shall be the Happy Condition of every Penitent in particular. For to this purpose it is, that our Lord, in those most comfortable Parables, describes the Joy and Satisfaction God and Angels take in the Conversion of a Sinner, by the Feasting and Gladness of the Shepherd, retrieving his stray Sheep, of the careful Woman seeking and finding her lost Piece of Money, and of the compassionate Father, gladly receiving the Prodigal Son. And thus much may suffice for the *Second Branch* of this Argument, the kind Expressions, and wonderful Means made use of by God, to invite and encourage Wicked Men, to abandon their vicious Courses, and return to Him and their *Duty*.

## S E C T. III.

*Concerning the Assurance of Pardon, which God hath given to all them that truly repent, and turn to him.*

**A**fter so large a Declaration, what exceeding Love God bears towards Mankind in general, and the earnest Sollicitations he makes use of to win Sinners over to their own Happiness, it will be a farther strengthening to this Argument, to observe, what Assurance he hath given all those, who are desirous to make some returns of Love, and willing to comply with his importunate Calls, that they shall be pardoned, and accepted, by him. And, although

this

this might be sufficiently gathered, and conceived from the Passages and Arguments already insisted upon; yet to take off all disquieting Doubts and Fears of this most important and comfortable Truth, I shall enlarge a little more, and endeavour to possess my Reader with the fullest and clearest Evidence of the Thing. In order whereunto, there can be but Two sorts of Proof necessary; which are, the Words, and the Actions of this offended Majesty; What he hath promised to every one who sincerely flees to him for Refuge; and what he hath actually performed to Persons, who have grievously offended him in any kind whatsoever.

For the *First* of these, his Promises; Nothing can be more apparent, than that the whole bent and drift of Scripture is in effect the same with that Text of *Isaiah*, *Let the Wicked forsake his Way, and the Unrighteous Man his Thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have Mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly Pardon.* It is not possible for any Engagements to be more express or solemn; for any Invitations to be more vehement and affectionate; for any Declarations to be more absolute and universal, than those, which his infinite Goodness hath condescended to make use of upon this occasion. No People, no Person, no Time or Season is excepted, But, *Whensoever the Wicked Man turneth away from his Wickedness that he hath committed, and doth that which is Lawful and Right, he shall save his Soul alive. Because he considereth, and turneth away from all his Transgressions that he hath committed, he shall surely live, he shall not die.* No kind of Sins, though never so heinous and horrible, are excluded, *All his*

Ch. 55. 6.

Ezek. 18.  
27, 28.

v. 22.

*Transgressions that he hath committed, they shall*  
 Isa. 1. 16, *not be mentioned unto him. Wash ye, make ye clean,*  
 17, 18. *put away the Evil of your doings; Cease to do Evil,*  
*learn to do well. Come now and let us reason toge-*  
*ther, saith the Lord; Though your Sins be as Scar-*  
*let, they shall be as Snow; though they be red like*  
*Crimson, they shall be as Wool. And again, to*  
*shew, that the foulest unfaithfulness is no bar to*  
 Jer. 3. 1. *Reformation in these Terms, They say, If a*  
*Man put away his Wife, and she go from him, and*  
*become another Man's, shall he return unto her again?*  
*Shall not that Land be greatly polluted? but thou*  
*hast played the Harlot with many Lovers, yet return*  
*again unto me, saith the Lord. Thus we see all*  
*Qualities and Conditions of Men, how many-*  
*fold, how contemptuous soever their Trans-*  
*gressions have been, are contained within these*  
*Exhortations to Repentance, and Promises of*  
*Remission.*

And what more can be expected, what  
 greater Encouragement can possibly be given,  
 upon these Occasions? Was ever any injur'd  
 Prince so large, in offers of Clemency to his  
 rebellious Subjects? Was ever provoked Fa-  
 ther so tender, so easy to be reconciled, to his  
 disobedient Children? Who can suspect him-  
 self to be accepted out of those Assurances, in  
 which all sorts of People, all kinds of Sins, all  
 Times and Seasons of Repenting and Believing,  
 are manifestly comprehended? O wretched  
 Man! who by distrust excludest thy self, whom  
 God hath not excluded. What is there in these  
 general, these affectionate Promises, which any  
 Man alive can find a colourable Pretence to  
 make the least Question of? Shall we doubt the  
 Intention of the Promiser? This is only Chari-  
 ty

ty and Compassion, and consequently can design nothing but our Good. Shall we suspect the Sincerity and Fidelity of the promiser? He is Truth it self, and cannot deceive us; Heaven and Earth are not so firm; even These in time shall fail and pass away, but it is not possible for his Word to fail. Shall we fear his Ability to perform what he hath promised? His Power is infinite, and knows no restraint, no Bounds, but what his Will is pleased to set to it; And these very Promises are the authentick Declarations of this Will, and how far he thinks fit to extend that Power. What Scruple then can remain to disquiet us? Or which of the Divine Perfections can occur to our Thoughts, which will not minister Ground of sweet and unspeakable Consolation? *Three Things there are, says St. Bernard, wherein my hope consists, and is even rendered impregnable. The exceeding Love of him, who calls me to him by Repentance. The infallible Truth and certainty of those Promises, by which he hath obliged himself to forgive, and to shew Mercy; and the unlimited Power he hath to perform to the uttermost, every Word that hath proceeded out of his Mouth. This is, to me, that threefold Cord, which the Scripture says, cannot easily be broken: A Cord let down to Sinners from above, to draw us up from this Prison of a World, to Heaven, which is our true and proper Country: and by it, if we will, we may ascend to the very Sight and Possession of God's eternal Kingdom, and heavenly Glory.*

Thus much may suffice for the Nature and Purport of the Promises themselves, and will be still more confirmed by our Consideration of the Second Branch of this Argument, the Performance and actual Execution of them. Whereof God hath given us so many repeated, so ma-

ny eminent Instances from time to time, that, ever since the World began, no One Man was disappointed of his hope, who returned from Sin to God, provided this Conversion were hearty, and attended with those Qualifications, which the Scripture hath prescribed as necessary to its acceptance. And the force of our Reasoning upon this Point lies here ; That, it is by no means probable, he will be worse than his Word hereafter, who hath all along kept it so punctually hitherto ; Especially under the Christian Covenant, which instructs us in one mighty Advantage, peculiar to ours above former times ; The knowing, that he, the very Person, who is our Judge, is also our Advocate, and Intercessor, and the Propitiation for those very Sins, of which he shall one Day come to take an

1 Joh. 2. 2. account.

Cast back thy Eyes then, sinful Man, whom thy own Fears have made faithless in this point, and take a view of all Times passed before thou camest into Being. Begin at the Creation, and continue thy enquiry down to this very Day ; and tell me, if thou canst, in all this wide compass, of Persons, Places, and Ages, of any one, though never so black and vile a Sinner, who upon his unfeigned return to God, was not readily and graciously received by him. The Disobedience of our first Parents was presently remitted, upon their signification of Shame and Sorrow for it. Nay, it was not remitted only, but a promise was made of our blessed Saviour, the Son of God to be sent in humane Flesh, that by this means they, and all their numerous Posterity, might be restored to that Glory and Happiness, which by that Fall they had lost. There are indeed, between this and the renew-  
ed

ed Expressions of this Promise to *Abraham* and the Children of *Israel*, some very terrible Works of the Divine Justice and Vengeance, recorded by *Moses*. But they were such, as only the impenitent Offenders perished under; And these are few, in comparison of the many more Examples of his Goodness and great Mercy.

Two or Three Persons only, throughout the whole Bible are mentioned, to have been finally rejected of God, notwithstanding some Sorrow, which they seem to have had for their Offences. The *First* of these is the Murderer *Cain*; but it is observable, that he was so far from acknowledging his Wickedness, as absolutely and impudently to deny the Fact; and afterwards, upon Conviction, the Sorrow he had was turned into Confusion and Despair. The *Second* was *Esau*, whom *St. Paul* styles a *prophane Person*, and he found no place for Repentance, that is, he could not prevail to have the Blessing upon *Jacob* reversed, though he sought it carefully with Tears. And *St. Chrysostom* assigns this Reason for his Rejection, that *He did* not sorrow as he ought to have done, nor were his Tears the Effect of true Grief and Goodly Remorse for the Fact he had been guilty of, but rather of Indignation and Rage. The *Third* is *Judas*, in the New Testament, who did indeed make some shew of Repentance, but it was a Sorrow, therefore ineffectual, because attended with Despair; and urging him rather to put an end to his Agonies by Death, than by addressing to God for Mercy. These Instances therefore do not come up to the present Case: Nor can they justify any Man's Doubt of being forgiven upon true Repentance; because they only prove, that some

Hom. de  
pen. ad  
pop. Anti-  
och.



Persons have been rejected, whose Repentance, whatever it might appear, was not true; but manifestly defective in some Qualification necessary to recommend it to God's acceptance.

But now if we turn our Eyes another way, and observe the numberless Instances of these sincere Penitents, who have been actually Received and Pardoned, no Prospect can be more sweet, more comfortable, more encouraging. From the time, that the People of *Israel* came to be formed into a distinct Nation, and governed by God's own appointment, how grievously, how daily did they offend his Divine Majesty? And yet, how graciously did his unspeakable Mercy Pardon and pass by the innumerable Faults committed against him? The whole Old Testament, in effect, is little else, than one continued Account of his incredible Patience, and infinite Compassion towards them. And, should I undertake to illustrate this Truth, by reckoning up all the particular Persons, admitted into Favour after many and grievous Provocations, it were hard to say, where it were proper to begin, or when it were possible to make an end. Let that most impious and profligate King *Manasses* serve as one Example for all, of whose most enormous Life and detestable Acts, the Books of *Kings* and *Chronicles*, and several Chapters in the Prophets speak so largely; Yet even this Man, when Misery and Captivity (a happy School oftentimes for Princes, whom Greatness and Prosperity had tempted to forget God, and despise Instruction and Reproof) when this Man's Calamities, I say, had brought him to a Sense of, and Sorrow for his former Wickedness, he became an eminent Proof of God's incomprehensible and boundless Mercy;

cy; he was accepted and forgiven, brought back from his Prison and Chains, and restored to his Throne, and, which is infinitely better, to God's Love and Favour again.

We have not, any where upon Record, a more remarkable, or a more celebrated Pattern of this kind, than the Case of the *Ninevites*, and therefore I cannot think it amiss to be somewhat particular in it. Against that People God had pronounced a Sentence of Destruction, and set himself a short Day for the Execution of it, which the Prophet *Jonas* was therefore commanded to go, and give them warning of. He, knowing very well the Nature of God, and the true Importance of his Threatnings, how readily he is disposed to spare and forgive, if Men, upon the notice of his Anger, be careful to appease it by sincere and speedy Amendment, fore-saw, that if he should carry this Message, and they should make the right use of it, their Calamity would be prevented, and so he should incur the censure of a false Prophet. Hence he chose rather to flee away by Sea to *Tarshish*, and so as he thought, escape the ungrateful Employment. But Almighty God so ordered the Matter, that, upon a Storm, the Ship's Crew cast *Jonas* into the Sea; there a Whale was ordered to receive him, and, after his miraculous Deliverance from this devouring Fish, he was a second Time commanded to repair to *Nineveh*, and execute his Commission. Accordingly he preached, that within forty Days that noble and populous City should be utterly destroyed. And the consequence of this Warning, was exactly what *Jonas* had before suspected. The *Ninevites* believed his Message, and immediately betook themselves to Repen-

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tance; God was satisfied with their Humiliation, and revoked the severe Decree gone out against them. *Jonas* at this was greatly scandalized, and expostulated the Case with God, very warmly; But God shewed him the unreasonableness of his Discontent, and so silenced his Complaints, that he was not able to make any Reply in his own Vindication: Which yet was done in so wise, so sensible, so moving a Manner, that few passages in Scripture are either more surprising, or better deserve our serious Consideration.

Joh 4. The angry Prophet could not bear to stay any longer in that City, the saving of which he vainly lookt upon, as a Reflection upon his Honour and Truth; and therefore he had provided himself a little Booth, without the Walls, whether he retired, and was sheltered there from the heat of the Sun, by a *Gourd*, that cast a Shadow over him. This *Gourd* God ordered a Worm to smite, so that it withered, and left him exposed to the Weather; and, when this Loss had provoked him to great Impatience, his Murmurings are answered thus. *Thou hast had Pity on the Gourd, for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow, which came up in a Night, and perished in a Night: And should not I spare Nineveh, that great City, wherein are more than sixscore Thousand Persons, that cannot discern between their Right Hand and their Left?* This then was the Plea, in defence of God's so very great inclination to Mercy, that the *Ninevites* were his own Workmanship, and the Labour of his Hands. A Plea, that holds equally Good, with regard to all Mankind, and of which, the Force hath been explained in the former part of this Chapter. But this, and  
what

what hath been alledged besides, relates to Things done under the Old Testament only, before the appearance of Christ in Flesh; and falls much short of that Season of Grace, under which we live at present.

For now, God himself is come down to us in Person, to shew the Riches of his Mercy, and discover all the fullness of it to wretched undone Mortals. No Examples of former Ages are once to be named in Comparison of that Clemency, extended by this last and most perfect Dispensation, to Mankind. Our Maker, and Master, hath suffered his Justice to be vanquished, as it were, and triumphed over by Mercy; and, in marvellous Compassion, hath dwelt in this Vale of Misery, conversed with his Creatures, on purpose to offer Pardon and Happiness, to as many as are content to embrace it. He does not only open the Fold to all those Sheep which Luk. 15. had gone astray and return of their own accord; But the Shepherd himself travels into the Wilderness to follow and look them out; And, John 10. when they are found, he brings them back upon his own Shoulders rejoicing; nay he hath laid down his own Life, and shed his dearest Blood in their defence, and to preserve them from the Wolf. O sweet Jesus? What can be greater Love than this? What more convincing Testimonies of Affection can the Heart of Man imagine or desire? Can we suppose, that he whose Bowels yearned over us so tenderly, will not open all the Treasures of his Goodness for us, when we return to him? Can he think any thing too precious, too much to do for us, who was content to redeem us at the expence of so much Suffering! Can we wonder that St. Paul's Character of the Gospel, that

that in it *Grace doth much more exceedingly abound* when God did thus empty himself for our sakes, and shed forth all the Riches of Heaven, for a Demonstration of his inestimable Love, to them that should ever after Repent and Believe?

From this kind Disposition it was, that our Lord, while upon Earth, delighted to converse with Sinners, to Cheer and Comfort their desponding Spirits, and give them Courage and Confidence in Him. And this he did so publicly, as thereby to incur the censure of the Scribes and Pharisees, and the contempt of many ruling Persons among the Jews. Hence flowed those gracious Words, and affectionate invitations, *Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. If any Man Thirst, let him come unto me and Drink; and Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out, The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost. There is more Joy in Heaven over one Sinner that repenteth, than over ninety and nine just Persons who need no Repentance.* Hence this Holy one of God was reputed and reproached, as a Friend and familiar Acquaintance of Harlots, and Publicans and Sinners. And so far indeed he was their Friend, as a Physician is to the Sick; he received, and embraced, and healed, and forgave, all that repaired to him. Scribes and Pharisees, Soldiers and Publicans, Harlots and Thieves, the most infamous Offenders; Assuring us that thus he would continue to do, after his Ascension, and when seated at the Right Hand of God. For there also is our Judge, but our Advocate too; our King, but our Mediatour, our God and our Redeemer, our Father and our Brother, our Priest and our Sacrifice; and in this double Capacity it is, that our safety

con-

Mat. 11.

John 6.

Mat. 9.

Luke 15.

consists. Since he who must determine our Cause, loves us most dearly, and pleads it for us withal most earnestly and affectionately.

What then may we not, what indeed ought we not to, hope, at the Hand of such a Lord, who hath left us such ample Declarations, and such undeniable Demonstrations of his Love, so many unparalleled Instances of Kindness and Condescension, and such noble Monuments of inexhaustible Mercy? Why should not his dealings with other People inspire us with a becoming Confidence; and put every Sinner upon taking Heart from these, as a Standard and Pattern of what he intends to do, for every one, who at any time comes in to Him? Why should not the Sweetness and the Remembrance of that Love, which hath been ever of old, draw us after him? according to that Meditation of St. Bernard upon those Odours mentioned in the Book of Canticles. "Sweetest Jesus, says he, the fresh, and delicious Scent of thy wonderful Clemency invites us to run after thee, when we are told, that thou despisest not humble Suiters, and dost not abhor Mourning Sinners. We know, O Lord, full well, that thou didst not reject the Thief that confessed thee, nor the sinful Woman that Washed thy Feet with her Tears, nor the Canaanitish Stranger that humbly expostulated her Case with thee, nor the Woman taken in Adultery when brought before thee, nor the Publican that followed thee, nor that Disciple that denied thee, nor that other, who persecuted thee; nor thy Murderers and Tormentors, who Scourged and Crucified thee. All these, O Lord, are so many rich Perfumes of thy most sweet Mercy, and by the

"Fra-

“fragrancy of these thy Ointments, we follow  
“and gladly run after thee.

#### SECT. IV.

##### *The Application of the former Sections.*

ALL that remains upon this Argument, is to apply the Glorious Things said of God's Mercy to each Man's Conscience and particular Purpose. And these Things are indeed so very glorious, that, it is not easy to conceive, how any Man, who reads and believes them, and is truly sorry for, and sincerely disposed to forsake his Sins, can entertain any Doubt or Distrust, whether he shall be pardoned for them or not. *It is God that Justifies, Who is he that condemneth?* says St. Paul. If he be inclined to deliver us, who shall be able to pluck us out of his Hands? If he declare, that he might be appeased, and upon what Terms we may depend upon Forgiveness, why should we presume to suspect him worse than his Word? Why should we not rather support our selves with that just Confidence advised by St. Paul, who calls upon Us, and upon every Sinner, in that Exhortation to the *Hebrews*. *Let us draw near with a true Heart, in full assurance of Faith, having our Hearts sprinkled from an evil Conscience, and our Bodies washed with pure Water: Let us hold fast the profession of our Faith without wavering, for he is faithful that promised; and let us consider one another, to provoke unto Love, and to Good Works.* The Apostle here plainly signifies, that any Sinner whatsoever, who shall resolve to purge himself from all his past Guilt, and shall employ the remainder of his Life in Charity and Good Works, may

Heb. 10.  
22, 23, &c.

may boldly, and with great assurance; approach to Almighty God; and shall not fail of Remission and a very kind Entertainment.

And if this be the true State of the Case, what Reason can any Man have to despair? Why should any Sinner cast away that Soul, which God hath shewed himself so very desirous to save? What a lamentable Thing is it, to see so many Christians languishing under the Burden of their Sins, and abandoning themselves to all manner of careless and dissolute Living, (which by the way, is the true Notion of Despair) out of this unreasonable and sensual Imagination, that they are gone so far already, and sunk so deep in Sensuality and the Habits of Vice, that it is impossible for them to amend, or in vain for them, to think of succeeding by such a Change of Life. I cannot better address my self to this sort of Men, than *St. Chrysostom* hath done, and therefore shall entreat my Reader, that he will very diligently attend to his reasoning upon the Matter.

“Art thou, says he, bred up in a false Religion? Think upon the Wisemen of the East. Hom. 2. in Psal. 51.

“Art thou an unjust Person? Think upon the Publican. Hast thou lived in uncleanness?

“Think upon the Harlot. Art thou a Murderer? Consider the Thief upon the Cross. Art

“thou a profane Person? Think upon *St. Paul*;

“Once a Blasphemer, but afterwards an Apostle; Once a Persecutor, but afterwards a

“Preacher of the Gospel; Once a *Tare*, but

“afterwards converted into Good *Wheat*;

“Once a Wolf, but afterwards a Shepherd;

“Once Lead, but then changed into Gold;

“Once a Pirate and Robber, but afterwards a

“careful Pilot; Once a Destroyer, but after-

“wards



"wards a Planter of God's Vineyard ; Once a  
 "Puller-down, but afterwards an eminent Ma-  
 "ster-builder of the Church. In him you see the  
 "excess of Malice, in him too the utmost vi-  
 "gour of a fervent Zeal ; in him both the Folly  
 "of the Servant, and the Clemency of the Ma-  
 "ster. Say not therefore in Bar to thy Repen-  
 "tance, I am a Blasphemer, or a Persecutor,  
 "or a Man of impure Life ; you have Instan-  
 "ces of all these Kinds before you, and a safe  
 "Port to escape Shipwrack by, notwithstand-  
 "ing. The Old Testament presents you with  
 "David, the New with St. Paul. Do not there-  
 "fore frame to thy self vain Excuses, or pre-  
 "tend Difficulties, where there are none. If  
 "thou hast sinned, repent. If thou hast sinned  
 "a thousand times, repeat thy Repentance as of-  
 "ten. This is the Balm, I would pour into  
 "thy Wounds, and this will assuage all the  
 "Anguish of them. I know the Shame and  
 "Despondency of a polluted and self-condemn-  
 "ing Conscience. The Devil stands at thy El-  
 "bow whetting his Sword to destroy thee, and  
 "suggesting these fatal and terrifying Accusati-  
 "ons. Thou hast spent thy Youth in Riot and  
 "Sensuality, thou hast squandered away thy  
 "Time ; thou hast been a Fornicator, an Un-  
 "just, a Covetous, a Perjured, a Profane, and  
 "Blasphemous Wretch ; And what hope canst  
 "thou have, of being saved after all this ? No  
 "no, thou art lost forever. And therefore,  
 "since there is no Redemption, make the best  
 "of that little Life thou hast left, and live in  
 "Jollity. Indulge thy Lusts, and never disqui-  
 "et thy self with fruitless Thoughts of amend-  
 "ing when it is too late.

"This is the Devil's Advice to Profligate  
"Men; but I advise the direct contrary. I  
"say, thou art not so far gone, but that thou  
"mayest yet recover thy self. If thou hast been  
"a Fornicator, thou mayst still be clean. If  
"thou hast committed Adultery, thou mayst  
"yet be forgiven. If thou hast fallen thou mayst  
"rise again. Thy Repentance in comparison is  
"but small, but the Goodness of thy Lord is  
"exceeding great. If thou hast been a Mur-  
"derer, be sorry and Repent. If thou hast  
"been Covetous and Unjust, make Restituti-  
"on, and grow wiser, and better, for the  
"time to come. If thou hast lived in Adultery,  
"do so no more. If thou art grievously wound-  
"ed, seek diligently for a Cure; While there  
"is Life there is Hope; though thou be got to  
"thy very last Day, to thy Sick-Bed, though  
"thou begin to draw thy Breath short, yet even  
"then Repent. The Mercies of God are not  
"limited to any time, and, though thy Hours  
"be few, these Mercies are many and great.  
"But you will say, how can this be? My  
"Wounds are Mortal, and Putrified, and can I  
"be healed in an Instant? Yes you may; you  
"may be sorry and confess from the Heart, and  
"if you do your part, God will do the rest.  
"Betake your self to Prayers, and Alms, and  
"all that your present Circumstances are capa-  
"ble of; and do not ask, how these are possible  
"to succeed. It is God, that Works, and do  
"you expect I should give you an account of his  
"doings? Almighty Power is concerned in  
"your Recovery, and do you despair of the  
"Effect? Your Physician applies Remedies,  
"and you rely upon his Skill, and submit to his  
"Methods, without enquiring how they ope-  
"rate.

“rate. How absurd is it then, to trust the Skill  
 “of a Fellow Servant, and a Creature like your  
 “self, and at the same time to distrust the abi-  
 “lity and kindness of your Lord and Creatour?  
 “Leave off your Doubts, and wonder and stand  
 “amazed, and magnify this Spiritual Physician.  
 “Shall God be disposed to put away thy Sin,  
 “and shall the Guilt of any Sins be too great  
 “for his Mercy?

“I would not be misunderstood in this Argu-  
 “ment. My meaning is not to encourage your  
 “Carelessness, or to encourage the vain Confi-  
 “dence of those who wilfully persist in Sin to  
 “the very last; but it is, to give you just No-  
 “tions, and Hopes of God’s marvellous Good-  
 “ness, and to prevent those Men falling into  
 “Despair, who do truly and earnestly Repent;  
 “for none of these are lost, if they do not give  
 “themselves up for lost; and so are discoura-  
 “ged from repenting.

In which long Discourse, this excellently Good  
 Man takes Care, so to sustain the worst of Sin-  
 ners, with a Confidence of God’s Mercy at  
 what time soever they duly seek it, as not to beat  
 them out in Negligence, or any wicked Delays  
 of this necessary Duty. To which purpose St.

De Temp.  
 Serm. 38.

*Augustin* likewise very Prudently and Piously  
 admonishes Wicked Men; *Let no one, says he,*  
*after a Hundred, no nor after a Thousand Sins utterly*  
*despair of God’s Mercy; but yet let him not so hope*  
*for it neither, as not to apply for it immediately: For*  
*when I forbid Despair, I would be understood to*  
*quicken Men up to reconcile themselves to God by*  
*amendment of Life. Otherwise it is very possible,*  
*that, when Custom hath hardened a Man in Vice,*  
*and rendred it familiar and habitual to him, he may*  
*not find himself able to deliver himself from the*

*Snares*

*Snares of the Devil, when he would be very glad to do it.*

And again. "It is not every Man that commits Sin that God hates, and declares against, as an Abomination to him, but such Sinners only, as transgress wilfully, and continue in their Wickedness. For no Man that will amend, and leave off his wicked Courses, can in reason, say he may not in Duty, distrust of God's Mercy. Since by his Prophet he himself hath sent us that comfortable Message, *Cast away your Transgressions, and so Iniquity shall Ezek. 18.* not be your ruine. But then this Mercy of God is of Advantage to us, then only, when it does not defer our Conversion, nor prove an Encouragement to bind Sin upon Sin. The Danger whereof, with regard to our Soul's Health, I think my self capable of giving you some tolerable Apprehension of, by the resemblance between the Wounds and the Sicknesses of this part, and what Sense and Experience teaches us in our Bodies. If a Man's Leg, or Arm be broken, we need not be told, how much Pain and Trouble it costs him before it be set, and perfectly cured again. But if any Limb happen to be broken or wounded, Twice, Thrice, or oftner still, in the very same place, You can easily imagin, how much more difficulty there must needs be to reduce this part to its primitive Strength and Soundness. Just thus it is in the Breaches made upon our Souls too. If a Man fall into Sin, and repent it a second time, and then apply himself to the proper Medicines quickly, by taking Sanctuary in unfeigned Repentance, such a Cure while the Wound is Green will ask no long time, and may possibly be so

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per-

Rom. 2.

" perfect too, that not so much as a Scar shall  
 " be left behind : But if he suffer the Sore to  
 " putrifie and enflame, by adding Sin upon Sin,  
 " if he be more sollicitous to cover, than to heal  
 " the Wound, it is much to be feared a Mortifica-  
 " tion will ensue: That Doom, I mean, pro-  
 " nounced by the Apostle, will be his Lot;  
 " who tells them that are so stupid as not to be  
 " sensible, that *the Goodness and Forbearance of*  
 " *God should lead them to Repentance; that they do*  
 " *by this hardness and impenitent Heart, heap up to*  
 " *themselves Wrath against the Day of Wrath, and*  
 " *Revelation of the righteous Judgment of God, who*  
 " *will not fail to render to every one according to his*  
 " *Deeds.*

And what more powerful Argument can be  
 urged, at once to support our Hopes, of Mer-  
 cy, and to take down our Presumption? The  
 Preacher tells us, that the *Words of the Wise are*  
*as Goats*, they enter deep, and spur us on to  
 Virtue. And, can we hear such Words as these,  
 without any Impression, any Awakening at all?  
 I hope not; And, for that Reason, will close  
 this Chapter with another Passage out of the  
 same Author, than which it is not easy to con-  
 ceive any Thing more fitted to move us, or  
 more pertinent to the Subject we are now upon.

" Almighty God ( says he, ) never despises  
 " any Man's Repentance, provided it be offer-  
 " ed to him, from an Honest Heart. Nay, he  
 " accepts it gladly, he embraces the Penitent  
 " most gladly, he endeavours to restore the  
 " Person to that State of Purity, in which he  
 " was, before he fell. And, which is more,  
 " though a Man be not able to exercise such a  
 " Repentance, as is perfect in all its parts, he  
 " accepts of what he can do, though it be done

in

"in never so short a Space. He doth not suffer  
 "any Degree of Conversion to Perish, or lose  
 "its just Reward. This I take to be *Isaiah's*  
 "meaning, when, in the Person of God, he  
 "says to *Israel*, *For a small Moment I have forsaken thee; but with great Mercies will I gather thee.* Isa. 54.  
 "In a little Wrath I hid my Face from thee, but  
 "with everlasting Kindness will I have Mercy on thee.  
 "Let us then, having these Examples before  
 "our Eyes, neither persevere in our Wicked-  
 "ness; nor despair of Reconciliation, if we for-  
 "sake it. Let us rather say, with Hearts full  
 "of Hope, *We will arise and go to our Father*, and  
 "turn to the Lord our God; for most assured-  
 "ly he will never turn away from any Man,  
 "that truly turns to Him. Himself hath  
 "said, *Draw nigh to God and he will draw nigh to you; cleanse therefore your selves ye Sinners, and purify your Hearts, ye Double-minded; for nothing but Sin can keep up a distance, and separate between him and us.* Jam. 4.  
 "Let us then take  
 "away this Bar, and nothing shall hinder that  
 "Friendship and Union, which he greatly  
 "desires. For to this very end did he create us,  
 "that he might bestow upon us eternal Blis in  
 "his Heavenly Kingdom. Hell was not made  
 "for us; but his own Kingdom was made for  
 "Men, and Hell for the Devil. Observe the  
 "difference of those two Sentences, which our  
 "Lord declares shall be pronounced at the last  
 "Day. *Come ye blessed Children of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you, from the Foundation of the World:* This to the Saints; but  
 "to the Damned, *Depart from me, ye Cursed,*  
 "into everlasting Fire, prepared for the Devil and  
 "his Angels. If then Hell Fire was made for  
 "Devils, but the Kingdom of Heaven was pre-

"pared for Mankind, and that from the begin-  
 "ing of the World, It lies upon us, only to  
 "take care; that we do not lose our Inheritance  
 "by continuing in Sin. While we continue in  
 "this Life, we are still in a Capacity of wash-  
 "ing away our Sins by Repentance, how many  
 "or grievous soever those Sins may formerly  
 "have been. But, when once we are taken out  
 "of the World, though we be then never so  
 "sorry, and repent never so heartily, (as no  
 "doubt we shall) yet all our Grief will then  
 "stand us in no stead at all. Our Teeth may  
 "gnash, our Mouths cry out, our Eyes gush  
 "out with Tears, our Hearts most bitterly de-  
 "plore our sad Condition; but there shall be  
 "none then to hear our Prayers or Complaints,  
 "none to help or pity us; not so much as a  
 "drop of Water upon the tip of a Finger,  
 "shall then be obtained to cool our Tongue in  
 "the midst of Flames unquenchable, and Tor-  
 "ments unspeakable: That killing answer of  
 "Abraham to the Rich Glutton is all we are  
 "to expect, *Between us and you there is a great*  
 "*Gulph fixed, so that they who would pass from*  
 "*hence to you, cannot; neither can they pass to us,*  
 "*who would come from thence.* This Exhortati-  
 "on of St. *Augustine's* is so full, so directly to our  
 "purpose, against despair of God's Mercies in  
 "the one extreme, and such a Presumption upon  
 "them as may render Men negligent and secure  
 "on the other; that it at once encourages our  
 "Amendment, and shews the Danger of delay-  
 "ing it. And therefore I cannot think any Thing  
 "more necessary to be added, upon the Subject  
 "designed to be treated of in this *First Chapter.*

C H A P. II.

*The Second Obstruction to a Holy Resolution. The pretended Difficulties of a Good Life. The fallacy of this Pretence discovered, and the many Advantages, which render Virtue and Piety easy and pleasant, explained.*

THE Considerations of God's infinite Goodness, and the undeniable Proofs of his readiness to forgive, have, I hope, set my Readers Heart at rest in that point; and secured him from all Temptations, that would provoke him to Despair. A Temptation which the subtle and malicious Enemy of Souls knows to be so utterly void of all Ground, that this very Mercy of God, upon which we have been enlarging, is Matter of perpetual Envy and Grief to him. And such a one too, as, he is sensible, will not answer his Designs, except with Persons long abandoned to sinful Habits, and who have little time left to make a thorough Reformation. This therefore is commonly the Method, by which he attacks the Profligate and Profane, the Old; the Hardned, or the dying Sinner. But those, who have not been so deeply entangled in his Snares, and seem to have a great part of Life still before them, he hath another way of managing. These he perswades to consult their present Ease, to be careful how they engage in the practice of Christian Virtues, by representing Religion under a false Light, as a

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Difficult, Unpleasant, and very Painful undertaking: full of Melancholy, and void of all Comfort; That, which destroys Good Society, robs them of all Mirth and Enjoyment of themselves, and the World; exposes them to perpetual Anxiety and Vexation of Mind, and enjoins Severities by no means supportable, to such Bodies, such Education, and such Inclinations and Customs, as the generality of Mankind carry about with them, and have been all along bred up in.

How plausible, and withal, how fatal, an Artifice, this is, we may easily perceive, if we reflect at all, either, how it is calculated to flatter, that Principle of Sensuality to which corrupt Nature stands so strongly byassed; or upon the vast Numbers of People seduced by it; Who adhere to these Insinuations, as the best Counsel and most perfect Wisdom, and look upon them, who choose, or advise, a contrary course as Men, either overborn by Prejudice, or defective in Discretion and good Sense. So that this pretence of the Difficulties and Disadvantages attending a strict and holy Life, is become a very strong, and a very usual Obstruction; Such, as discourages infinite Souls from a resolute and vigorous pursuit of Holiness and Salvation; and therefore it is absolutely necessary to the Design I am driving on, to examine it thoroughly, and give it a full Answer.

Now here first of all, I shall take the liberty to affirm, that allowing the Objection, and even supposing the Practice of Virtue encumbered with all the Hardships which the Adversary of Souls, and our own partial Lusts, endeavour to charge it with; yet, even upon these Terms, it deserves our Preference, because the Rewards

wards it proposes are so incomprehensibly glorious, and desirable, that no Pains ought to seem too much in order to the attaining them. Nay, I might urge the same Argument farther, with regard to the insupportable and infinite Punishments, reserved for the Disobedient and Wicked too. For, if we think it Wisdom to be so exceeding solicitous, for avoiding much less Calamities; If no Labour no Trouble be declined, which may preserve us from Imprisonment, or Sickneſs, from the loss of Goods, or of this wretched and transitory Life; Can we then, in reason, think any thing too much to do, or to endure, which may deliver us from those Torments of Hell Fire, that are not only Intolerable, but Eternal? The former of these Considerations is urged by St. Paul, who tells us, that *the Sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the Glory that shall be revealed.* The latter intimated by St. Peter, who, after the declaring the certainty of our Lord's coming to Judgment, infers, *what manner of Persons ought we then to be in all manner of Holy Conversation and Godliness?* As if he should have said, no Labour, no Hardship, ought to seem grievous to us, whereby the Terroures of that dreadful Day may be avoided. What do we think the Rich Man in the Parable would do; What would he not do, to purchase a release from those tormenting Flames, of which he there complains so bitterly? How would he Labour, and Pray, how bountiful would he shew himself in his Alms, rather than fall again into that Place of Misery? After how very different a manner would he behave himself, from what he did while upon Earth, could he be allowed to lead his Life over again, and put the Issue of his final State upon a second Tryal?

Rom. 8. 18.

2 Pet. 3. 11.

To these Pains fit for us to submit to the taking, upon our own Account, a farther Motive might be fetched, from the infinite Pains Christ took for us; The infinite Benefits he hath bestowed upon us; The infinite Offences we have committed against him; The infinite Examples of Saints, who have travelled this rugged Way before us, who yet were in all points as sensible of, and naturally as averse to Trouble and Suffering, as our selves are. And sure, upon all these accounts, it would very ill become us to boggle at, and be discouraged by, some Difficulties, were they in reality as many, and as great, as some Persons form to themselves, and as the Devil represents them to be, when he labours most to magnify them to us.

But, in very deed, the matter is quite otherwise; and all these frightful Ideas are an Artifice of the Enemy, contrived to discourage, and deceive, and destroy us. Our Lord hath  
 Mat. 11. 30. told us most truly, that *his Yoke is easie, and his Burden is light*; and St. John, for our Comfort,  
 1 Joh. 5. 4. declares, that *his Commandments are not grievous*. Whence then comes it to pass, that Men conceive such insuperable Difficulties, attending a Christian's Obedience? One Reason no doubt, and next to the delusion of the Tempter, the chief is, that Sense they have of a depraved and diseased Mind; but, while they feel themselves languishing, under the Malady, they attend not to the Medicine prepared to heal it. St. Paul indeed calls himself a wretched Man,  
 Rom. 7. *in regard of the Law in his Members, which he found perpetually warring against the Law of his Mind*: (that Rebellion of Appetite left in our sensitive Soul by original Sin) but then, he forgets not at the same time, to magnify *the Grace of God*  
 through

through *Jesus Christ*, which delivered him from the body of that Death. So these Men should do well, in the midst of all the desponding Reflections upon their own Infirmities, to remember that support given to *St. Paul* in his distress, *My Grace is sufficient for thee, for my Strength is made perfect in Weakness.* <sup>2 Cor. 12. 9.</sup> Their Case is much like that of *Elisha's* Servant, who gave himself for lost, when surrounded with a huge Army of *Syrians*, <sup>2 Kings 6.</sup> ready to assault him; but, by the Prayers of his Master, God opened his Eyes, and discovered an invisible Guard, which he thought not of; Chariots of Fire, and Hosts of Angels, much more numerous and powerful, than all the force that came against him. And then he was soon convinced, that they who took his part were much the stronger side, and that he was absolutely in safety, even then when his Danger appeared most formidable.

Thus is it with the weak and fearful Christian; whose Heart misgives him upon the approach of Temptations, and the Sense of his own Inability to resist them. The Conflict appears painful, the Conquest impossible; but it is, only because his own Negligence hath hindered him from tasting those heavenly Refreshments and powerful Succours, which Almighty God never fails to sustain those faithful Combatants with, who are willing and ready to enter the Lists, and fight manfully under his Banner. *St. Paul*, who had Proof of these Advantages, gives another account of the Matter; and, after reckoning up all the Hardships which could render this Service hottest, shouts forth with Triumph, *In all these Things we are more than Conquerours, through him that loved us.* <sup>Rom. 8. 37.</sup> And then he proceeds to that noble Protestation, that

Rom. 38, 39. that neither *Death nor Life, nor Angels, nor any other Powers, nor Things present, nor Things to come, nor any Creature whatsoever, should be able to separate him from the Love of God, or make him abandon his Service.* And this, upon the confidence of that assistance, of whose Spiritual Efficacy he sticks not to affirm, that he could do even all Things, through Christ strengthening him.

Phil. 4. 13. The Prophet *David* had respect to this Assistance, when he promises for his own Diligence and Fidelity upon it, *I will run the way of thy Commandments, when thou hast set my Heart at liberty,* and how cheerfully he did this, is plain,

Psal. 119. from his professing, that he had greater Delight in these, than in all manner of Riches, that they were more to be desired than Gold, or precious Stones, and sweeter than Honey and the Honey-comb. And thus, by magnifying, not only the Advantage, but the Pleasure of a virtuous Life, he utterly confounds all those idle pretences of Difficulty and uneasiness, with which our own sloth, or the subtlety of the Tempter, would deter us from it.

19. And, if *David* could speak so largely in commendation of the Old Law, which yet was much harder than the New; how much more may Christians alledge in vindication of a Covenant of Grace, where the Service is incomparably more easy, and the Assistances toward it more abundant and effectual.

For I would ask any Man, who scares himself with these fantastical Images of invincible difficulty, to what Purpose he thinks Christ came into the World? Why did he take our Flesh, and Labour, and Suffer, and Bleed, and Die for us? Why does he intercede so earnestly with the Father, and appoint his Sacraments for conveyances of Grace? Why did he send his Spirit

Spirit and publish his Gospel? What are those *Good Tidings* which the Gospel imports? What mean those terms of *Grace* and *Mercy* so often inculcated, and the sweet and comfortable Name of *Jesus* so much repeated there? Does not all this infer Deliverance from our Sins? *Mat. 1.21.* From Sins past by the Death of our blessed Redeemer, and from Sins to come, by the same Death, and the helps of his Grace, shed upon us more abundantly than before? Was it not foretold, as one principal end of Christ's coming, *that the crooked should be made straight, and the rough places plain?* *Isa. 40. 4.* Were not the Gifts of his Spirit distributed for this very purpose, that the exercise of Piety might be rendred easy and delightful, that Men might have trust in Dangers, and joy in Tribulations, and assurance of Victory, if they strive lawfully? Is not this the Design, the Substance, the Sum, of the Gospel, the Promises of the Prophets, the Doctrine and Belief of all the Saints? The very thing, wherein the so much boasted Riches and Treasures of God's Mercy in this new Covenant do truly and properly consist? So that, to deny it, is in effect to evacuate the whole Gospel, and, if we suppose it impossible for us to get the better of our Sins, we plainly suppose, that all Christ hath done and suffered for us, hath been done and suffered in vain.

This might suffice to dispossess Men of the Notions they frequently entertain, concerning the Terms of a Christian's Duty, as if it were an impracticable, or an uncomfortable Undertaking. But, in regard these Temptations to feeble-mindedness and dejection are both very usual, and very fatal too, I think it not amiss upon this Occasion, to shew what particular supports Men have,

have, or may have, in this Business, if they be not wanting in the due seeking and applying them. And here, I shall *first* of all instance in the sundry Helps, by which God facilitates the Good Man's Duty; and then *secondly*, I will add some Instructions and Admonitions, how we may make our best advantage of those Helps.

### SECT. I.

#### *The Helps for making a virtuous Life easy.*

**T**O pretend to give a particular account of those excellent Arts and Means, made use of by God, for the cherishing, comforting, and strengthening the Souls of his faithful Servants, were a very bold, and a vain Attempt. Many secrets of this kind there are, many private significations of his Love, which none, but They who feel, can either discover or conceive. My endeavour therefore shall be to mention those known and ordinary ways only, by which the Scripture tells us, God is wont to sweeten the observance of his Laws, and to show himself present with Good Men, for their Consolation and Encouragement.

1. The *First* of these is the Infusion of his Grace into their Souls, which strengthens Them, as it did *St. Paul*, in Temptations and Distresses. The force and efficacy whereof is such, that it works a thorough Change many times in the whole state of the Soul influenced by it; renders that clear which before was dark, and doubtful; makes things delightful, to which the Man before was most averse; and those easy, which he thought difficult, and

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even impossible. With respect to this mighty Alteration, the Prophet says most emphatically, that God would give his people a new heart, and put a new Spirit within them, by this means causing them to walk in his statutes, and to keep his judgments and do them. Ezek. 36. What could be spoken more significantly of the Power of Divine Grace? What more pertinently to the taking off the scruples and fears of weak and doubting Christians, than that, whatever they may find themselves by Nature, they shall be made quite another sort of Men by Grace? Thus St. Paul, speaking of the Conquest over the sensual Principle within us, says, *We know this, that our old man is crucified with Christ, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.* Rom. 6. 6. By the old man and the body of sin the Apostle means our rebellious Appetites and Passions. And These are therefore said to be crucified and destroyed with Christ, because, by his Death, we obtain Grace and Power to resist and mortify these Appetites; and so to deliver our selves from the bondage of Sin, as not to contract the guilt of consenting to it, if we will our selves assert our Freedom. This is that noble Victory promised long ago by Isaiah, and applicable in it's exalted and spiritual Sense to every Christian, *Fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God; I will strengthen thee, yea I will help thee; yea I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness. Behold all they that were incensed against thee shall be ashamed and confounded; they that strive with thee shall perish; thou shalt seek them that contended with thee, and shalt not find them; for I the Lord thy God will hold thy right hand.* Isa. 41. 10.

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Thus shall these disorderly Passions be, as though they were not, that is, They shall prove no hindrance to our Salvation. Nay they shall be better, than though they were not, and even promote our Virtue and Happiness, if we take good care to manage them aright. For these Desires and Passions, are like wild Beasts, fierce and furious in their own Nature, and bent upon rapine, and mischief, and destruction; but when mastered and tamed, as by God's Grace and our own Diligence they may be, they become exceeding useful and necessary, and are a Whet and Spur to our Virtues. Thus Anger is serviceable to Zeal; Hatred to the irreconcilable aversion against Sin; Haughtiness of Mind, to contempt of the World, and scorning to do mean and dishonourable Things; Love, to the vigorous Undertaking of hard and heroick Actions, in consideration of the Person, for whose sake we do so, and the infinite Obligations which his Benefits innumerable have laid upon us, to decline nothing that may be acceptable to him. And besides all this, The very Conflict necessary for the subduing these Passions, and that perpetual struggle, in which we are exercised, is appointed and left to us, for our mighty Advantage. This it is, that finds Work for our Patience, our Humility, our Constancy; This makes our Desert and our Victory in this Life, and entitles us to our Glory and Crown in the Life to come; as St. Paul observes in his own case; and this, in proportion, is the common Case of all Christians.

2 Tim. 4. It is then to no purpose, that the slothful Man cries out upon a *Lion in the way*, and pretends the strength of his Passions, the Weakness

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ness and Corruption of humane Nature, the  
Tenderness of his Constitution and his inability  
to sustain the Hardships and laborious Exercises  
of strict Piety and Virtue; These and what-  
ever other Allegations are customary upon  
this Occasion, how gravely and solemnly soe-  
ver urged in his own Vindication, are all mere  
Excuses, trifling, false, dishonourable, Excuses:  
Detractions from the merits and efficacy of  
Christ's Death, who is dead in vain, if he have  
not rescued us from the slavery of our Lusts,  
and rendred our Duty more pleasant, and easy,  
and practicable than before. For, if God be with  
us, who can be against us? The Lord is our light  
and our Salvation, whom then shall we fear? The  
Lord is the strength of our Life, of whom shall we be  
afraid? Though an host were encamped against us,  
yet will we not cast away our confidence. For God  
is on our side, and through him will we overthrow  
our Enemies, and tread them under that make  
head against us. Nay, we will do it with Ease;  
for so much intimates St. John, when he says,  
God's Commandments are not grievous, and adds  
immediately, for whatsoever is born of God over-  
cometh the World; and this is the Victory, that  
overcometh the World, even our Faith: 'Tis this  
resolute perswasion of the Mind, this depen-  
dence upon his Truth and Promises by  
those Assistances which are never wanting to  
true Believers, conquers the Difficulties and  
Temptations of the World, and makes the way  
of God's Commands smooth and pleasant. And  
so much of the *First* and principal Help, the  
Source of all the rest, the Grace of God inspir-  
ed into the Soul of every faithful Christian, for  
his strength and comfort.

Rom. 8.

31.

Psal. 27:

1, 2.

Psal. 44-5.

1 John 5.

4, 5.

A *Second* thing, which contributes much to *easing* Christ's Yoke, and *lightning* his burden is, fervent Love of that God, whose Commandments we undertake to obey. And here, I need not labour, since every ones own Experience will tell him, how irresistible the force of this Passion is, and how supportable it renders the most difficult and painful Undertakings. What, but this could make tender and delicate Mothers take such perpetual, such infinite Pains in bringing up their Children, and even rejoicing in their unwearied Labours for them? What but this, ties us to the Beds of our sick Friends, in despite of all the noisomness of their Disease, or all the Inconveniences which Watching, or Attendance, or Infection, may bring upon us? Nay, what else moves the very Brute Beasts to spare from their own Food, to expose their own Lives for the sustenance and protection of their Young? And therefore (as St. *Augustine* presses the point,) If Merchants balk no hazard for Love of Gain; if Hunters are beat out of the Field by no Weather, for Love of Sport; if Soldiers march up to the Mouth of a loaded Cannon, for Love of Booty: If Men can love the Creatures so vehemently, that great Labours shall seem easy, nay, that they shall cease to seem Labours, and be courted as Pleasures; How much more shall the Love of Good Men towards God, the best, the only perfect Object of their Affections, make all those Pains easy and comfortable, which are taken with a design to please him here, and in order to a full and eternal Enjoyment of him hereafter?

This vehemence of Love was that, which softened all that intolerable anguish both of Body

Serm. 9.  
de Verb.  
Dom.

dy and Mind, which Christ endured, and cheerfully embraced, for our Sakes. And the desire to return this Love was the reason too, why such bitter Sufferings seemed as nothing, to the Zeal of the Primitive Christians. Prisons, and Racks, and Fires, and Crosses, all were welcome for the sake of that Dear Lord and Master, in comparison of whose Favour, Life it self was not, ought not to be esteem'd dear. These are the natural effects of true and fervent Love, to make Difficulties vanish, and to render any thing which may recommend us to the Party beloved, however harsh in it self, yet, with that prospect, sweet, or at least very supportable: And much more may we expect it should do thus, with the Commandments of Almighty God, which, abstracting from all other Considerations, are in themselves most just and reasonable, and worthy to be made every wise Man's Choice. "He that truly loves God, Aug. in Joan. Tract. 26. hath a feeling of what I say, but if I speak to a languid and cold Heart, it is no wonder, if He do not understand me. And hence it seems to be, that our Lord so very often mixes the mention of Love, with that of keeping his Commandments. As knowing it to be the only sure Ground, upon which the regard and observance of them entirely depends. And the general want of this, no doubt, it is, that brings them under such a general disrespect. Thus we find him telling his Disciples, Joh. 14, 15, 21, 23, 24. If ye love me, keep my Commandments; and He that hath my Commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and, Joh. 5. If a Man love me, he will keep my Words; he that loveth me not, keepeth not my Sayings. And St. John to the same purpose. This is the love of God, that we keep his Command-

ments, and his Commandments are not grievous. They are not so, to One that loves him ; This single Consideration renders them otherwise ; because he studies to please God above all things, and so gets quit of that, which makes every Action burdensom, the doing it against a Man's Inclination and good-liking. And this is so sure a Mark, that my Reader will do well to measure himself by it ; and to see, by the delight, or the lothness and disrelish he finds to good Actions ; what Portion he hath, or whether indeed he have any of true Love for his Lord and Saviour.

- To these Two I might add several other Privileges and Comforts of Piety and Virtue, infinitely to be preferred before all the Jollity and Enjoyments of the Gayest and most Prosperous Sinner in the World. And the next I shall name is, a certain peculiar Light of Understanding, styled in Scripture-Language, *Wisdom*, and the *Knowledge of the Holy*. By which is meant, a singular Advantage of being directed, more effectually than Common Men, in Spiritual Matters, relating to Salvation, and the means necessary for obtaining it. This *David* acknowledged as a Mercy from above,
- Prov. 9,  
10. *Thou hast made known to me the way of Life ; Thou makest me to understand Wisdom secretly ; and, I have more Understanding than all my Teachers, for thy Testimonies are my Meditation. I am wiser than the Antient, because I keep thy Precepts.* This
- John 1. is that saving *Light*, with which Christ is said
- 1 Joh. 11. to enlighten his Servants, and the *Unction of the Holy* one to teach them all things. This is
- Jerem. 31. that *Writing of God's Law in Men's Heart*, promised by *Jeremiah*, and abundantly performed
- Heb. 8. under this Season and Covenant of Grace ; and  
the

the being taught of God foretold by *Isaiah*. In *Iſa. 54.*  
a Word, This is that Secret of the Lord, among *Joh. 6.*  
them that fear him, that Sovereign and uncommon  
Comprehension of the Laws of God, of  
the Excellency, the Wisdom, the Advantages  
of them, which *David* ſo earneſtly deſires in  
that moſt Divine *Pſalm*, which begins with this  
vehement Expreſſion of his eſteem for it, *Bleſ-*  
*ſed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the*  
*law of the Lord. Bleſſed are they that keep his Te-*  
*ſtimonies, and that ſeek him with their whole Heart.*

By this Illumination from above, directing  
good Men ſo carefully, their progreſs in Vir-  
tue muſt needs be rendred very comfortable.  
For it is in the Paſſage to Heaven, as in all  
the Journeys Men take in this World; The bet-  
ter Eyes any one hath, and the more perfectly  
he underſtands his Way, the more cheerfully  
and ſecurely he travels forward. It is of great  
Moment, to know where we go, what we do,  
how we ought to govern our ſelves, what  
Meaſures are to be taken, what Precipices and  
wrong Paths to be avoided, and what we are  
to expect at our Journey's End. With regard  
to all which, we may underſtand that of *St.*  
*Paul*, that the Spiritual Perſon judgeth and diſ- *1 Cor. 2.*  
cerneth theſe things, but the Carnal and Natural  
Man is ſo blind and ſtupid, that he neither ſees  
them himſelf, nor receives them from ſuch as  
are both qualified, and deſirous, to inform him  
better. In the Perſon of theſe, *Isaiah* deſcribes  
the Miſery of their State, *Judgment is far from* *Iſa. 59, 9.*  
*us, neither doth Juſtice overtake us; we wait for* *10.*  
*Light, but behold Obſcurity; for Brightneſs, but*  
*we walk in Darkneſs: We grope for the Wall like*  
*the Blind, and ſtumble at Mid-day, as in the Night.*  
This is the Calamity of wicked Men; They are  
not

not sensible, what slippery Ground they are upon; nor whither the Way, they are in, will certainly carry them at last; but live in most dangerous, and most uncomfortable Ignorance. *The light of Righteousness hath not shined unto them, (as the Wiseman introduces them complaining) neither hath the Sun of Wisdom risen upon them, but they weary themselves in the way of Wickedness and Destruction: And, in proportion, as the want of this Light must needs be wearisome and sad, so the Enjoyment of it cannot but be very cheerful and comfortable to the Holy and Good Man.*

Wisd. 5,  
6, 7.

4. Another very remarkable Advantage, which contributes much to the rendring Virtue easy and pleasant, is, That inward and secret Consolation, with which God sustains the Hearts of them that serve him faithfully. I call it *Secret*, because They only know it, who have received and felt it, for which reason Christ himself terms it the *Hidden Manna*, and David the *Plentiful Goodness*, which God hath laid up for them that fear him. Thus Almighty God promises, that he will allure the devout Soul, and take her aside into the Wilderness, and speak friendly to her in private. By all which Expressions of the Wilderness, and Hidden, and laying up, we are given to understand, that these Privileges are peculiar to the Godly, and that carnal and vitious People have no part in this Blessed Favour.

Rev. 2.  
Psal. 31.

Hof. 2.

But now, how exceeding great, how inestimably sweet, these Heavenly Comforts are, to the Persons that tast and feast upon them, no Tongue of Men or Angels can express. The abundance of their Joy David hath given us some Notion of, when he says, that with God

Psal. 36.

in the Well of Life, and that good Men shall drink of his Pleasures, as out of the River. So largely do they indulge in them, as to have no relish left for any Satisfaction of this vain World; but, like St. Peter upon the Mount, seem to forget themselves, and talk of building Tabernacles, that they may set up their Rest here for ever. This is that *River of Pleasure* at God's right Hand, which descends from above, and overflows the Hearts of the Pious with Joy inexhaustible. It is a Taste of Heaven, while upon Earth, to refresh and keep them from fainting in their Journey thither. A Sample, as it were, of that precious Treasure, which God puts into our Hands, that we may judge of the true Worth of the Commodity, and, like Wise Merchants, not grudge to come up to his Price, even though he should require us to sell all we have besides, for the purchase of it. This is that *Voice of Joy and Health*, in the dwelling of the Righteous, with regard to which the Psalmist cries out in another Place, *Blessed is the People, O Lord, that can rejoyce in thee.* A Blessing which St. Paul was sensible of, when he said, *I am filled with Comfort, I am exceeding joyful in all our Tribulation.* And what can be said higher to describe the Divine Power of this Spiritual Comfort, than that even Affliction and Persecution cannot destroy, cannot so much as damp it?

If my Reader be concerned to know, how it comes to pass, that he hath never yet tasted these sweet Comforts, of which others give such a magnificent Account; I must answer him, that the Reason is more than intimated before. This is not Meat for every Mouth, but kept up in reserve for the Beloved, and



chosen of God. A Soul immerst in Sense, and worldly Pleasures cannot be partaker of these Dainties; nor will they dwell with polluted Thoughts and Designs. The *Ark* and *Dagon* could not stand upon the same Altar, nor will Christ submit to share the Heart with *Mammon*. God sent no *Manna* till all the Provision of *Egypt* was spent, and this Heavenly hidden *Manna*, is tied to the same Rules; it will not descend till vain Cares, and sinful Inclinations are sent off to make room for it. Though God be liberal, yet is he not lavishly profuse. He will not cast his Pearls before Swine, nor give out Tastes and Patterns, to Them, who have no Disposition to buy. Do but resolve unfeignedly to serve him, and set about it in good earnest, and then this Joy will flow in upon thee; and, as it never yet failed any Man, so it will be sure not only to answer, but far exceed, thy largest Expectations. The Evil Habits of thy past naughty Life shall be no bar to it. For so abundantly kind and tender is the God we serve, that he is forward in encouraging all that sincerely return to him, and takes particular care, that They who have forsaken him long and wandred far, shall meet with at least as friendly Entertainment, when they flee to him for Mercy, as others who never broke loose from him at all.

Luke 15. This the Parable of the Prodigal Son was designed purposely to assure us of; whose relenting Father received, and cherished him, with greater Expressions of a solicitous and tender Affection; than he did the elder Brother, who had all along lived in his Family. And the Reasons for this Behaviour seem to be Two. The One the Joy for recovering one who

who seemed to be lost, as our Saviour hath particularly illustrated the Case. The other, the Support and Encouragement of this returning Penitent, that he might have no reason to Repent of his Bargain, but immediately feel the advantage of so wise a Change. A Figure of this Proceeding with Christians yet weak and timorous, God seems to have given us, in that memorable Passage of his conducting the Israelites, in their flight out of Egypt. *It came to pass* Exod. 13. 17. *when Pharaoh had let the People go, that God led them not by the Way of the Land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, lest peradventure the People Repent, when they see War, and they return to Egypt: But God led the People about, through the Way of the Wilderness of the Red-Sea.* In like manner does he constantly consider the present Circumstances of his People; What their Infirmities, and their Occasions are: He is careful not to discourage them with Difficulties too mighty for them to encounter; but leads them safely and gently, and sustains them with those present Satisfactions, which Minds, yet feeble, and lately escaped from the bondage of Sin, stand in need of to confirm them in their better Choice. O! Who can express, Who can conceive, Who can admire, as it deserves, this Love, this Management, of our most Wise, most indulgent Father!

5. A Fifth Privilege of Holy Men, which conduces very much to the Ease and Pleasure of their Lives, is the Testimony of a Good Conscience; Of which St. Paul made so great account, 2 Cor. 1. c. 10. that he calls it his *Glory*, and his *Rejoycing*. And of this is that Observation of the Wiseman true in the best and strictest importance of the Prov. 15. Words, that *He that is of a merry Heart hath a* 15.

Gen. 4.  
Mat. 27.  
Mark 9.

Job. 15.  
20, &c.

Hom. 8.  
ad Pop.  
Antioch.

*continual Feast.* A Feast, which the Virtuous enjoy every day of their Lives; and how then is it possible, that Minds, thus quiet and secure, should live in such uneasiness, as the Men of the World fondly imagine? On the other hand, the Consciouſness and Reproaches of Guilt are an unsupportable Torment to Wicked Men: who are incessantly stung, like *Cain* for the Murder of his Brother, and driven to all the distractions of Despair, like *Judas* for his Treachery to his Master. This is that *never dying Worm* mentioned by our Blessed Saviour, which lies gnawing at their Hearts Night and Day. It must needs do so, because Wickedness in its own Nature is determined to bear Testimony against it self; and a troubled Mind always forebodes dreadful Miseries hanging over its Head, because it is sensible of having deserved them. The wretched Condition of such People is well described in the Book of *Job*, *The Wicked Man travelleth with Pain all his Days, and a dreadful sound is ever in his Ears. He believeth not, that he shall return out of Darkneſs, and he is waited for of the Sword. He wandreth abroad for Bread, saying, Where is it? He knoweth that the Day of Darkneſs is ready at his Hand. Trouble and Anguish make him afraid, and prevail against him as a King ready to the Battel.*

What Creature can be imagined in a more deplorable Condition, than he, who thus carries his own death about him? What Fears, what Perplexities, what horrible Despair, rend the Heart of this Wretch? Sinners, (says *St. Chrysostom* very truly,) suspect every thing; they start at their own Shadow, tremble at every little Noise, and are jealous, that every Man they meet is making at them to destroy them  
“ If

"If they see others talking, they presently conclude themselves to be the Subject of their Discourse. Such is the quality of Sin, that it betrays it self, without any Accuser: It keeps the committer in Fear, where there is no visible appearance of Danger; *The Wicked flee* Prov. 28. *when no Man pursueth.* And why does he flee? Because he hath an Accuser within, that is eternally pursuing him; This he carries about him, and cannot run away from; The worst and most importunate of all Accusers, himself, and his own Conscience, which dogs him wherever he goes, and is continually Upbraiding and Scourging, and Wounding him in the tenderest part. But the Righteous is bold as a Lion; free, and easy, and brave, even in Danger and Death it self. And thus much may serve for our Fifth Consideration.

## SECT II.

*Some other Helps and Comforts peculiar to Good Men, and instrumental to their present Happiness.*

6. **T**He Priviledges, already mentioned, lead us very naturally to the discovery of another, which consists in a lively hope, and most glorious Prospect of eternal Happiness and Salvation. And this is a noble Prerogative indeed; One of the richest Jewels imparted to Mortals, before they are admitted to a Participation of all the fulness of their Heavenly Father's Treasures. This sweetens the bitterest Cup given us to drink in this Life, and turns Sorrow it self into Joy. By this, with St. Paul, *We glory even in* Rom. 5.3,  
Tri-4. 5.

*Tribulations ; because we know, that Tribulation worketh Patience ; and Patience, Experience ; and Experience, Hope ; and Hope maketh not ashamed. This is our mighty stay amidst the Tossings and Tempests of a troublesom World ; for so it is called, an Anchor of the Soul, both sure and steadfast ; a strong Consolation, and impregnable Refuge, fastned upon the Promises, which God, who cannot lie, hath most solemnly made to his Servants. This is that hardned Helmet of Salvation, which keeps off all the Blows, by which the Devil, and the World intend our Ruin, when they lay at us most furiously. In short, this is so firm a defence to a Good Man, that come Health or Sicknes, Riches or Poverty, Prosperity or Disasters, Life or Death ; though the Floods of Persecution rise, and the Waves and Storms roar and rage never so horribly, still the Language of his Heart is that of the Psalmist, My trust is in God, I will not fear what can be done unto me. Nay even with Job, he declares, Though the Lord slay me, yet will I hope in him. And this is, what the Scripture calls, the Boldness of a Lion, whose Excellence it is, to be then most couragious, when he is in greatest danger.*

But, with the ungodly it is not so : They have no part in this Confidence, no Inheritance in this Consolation. The Scriptures tell us, that such Men's Hope is vain, that it shall perish, that their expectation is full of Terrour in stead of Comfort, and is even as the giving up of the Ghost. How can we suppose it should be otherwise, if we consider Two Things? First, That whatever wicked Men pretend, their Confidence is not in God, but in the World ; they trust in the Arm of Flesh, as the Prophet expresses it, and make Lies their Refuge : The Riches, and Streng<sup>th</sup>,

Strength, and Friendship, and Authority, and such other transitory Advantages of the present Life, as cannot but deceive them. Thus the *Hope of the Ungodly* is represented as *Dust blown away with the Wind*, as a *Froth or Bubble driven about in a Storm*, as the *Smoak dispersed here and there with a puff of Air*, as the *Remembrance of a Guest, that carrieth but a Day*. So exceedingly vain are all the Objects of a Wicked Man's Trust, so quickly do they fail him, and so sure are they to give way, and let him drive, upon the first springing up of Adversity.

'Tis true indeed, these Men would not be thought to place their Confidence in these Things, but in God only: But in this they dissemble, and therefore what one Holy Author calls the *Hope of the Wicked*, another truly stiles the *Hope of Hypocrites*. For indeed, with whom do these Persons consult, or whence do they look for assistance, in all their Difficulties? From God, or from the World? Is not this their Comfort in Affliction? Their Rejoycing in Prosperity? The end and aim of all their Actions and Designs? Is the Honour of God any part of the Wicked Man's Intention? Or his Law the Measure and Rule of his Proceedings? How then can he depend upon the Assistance of one, who hath no part in the Work? How can he flee to him for Succour in those Dangers, for whose sake they are not undergone? He builds not with the Wiseman upon the Rock, but lays his tottering Foundation in the Sands; and therefore (as our Lord hath warned him) *when the Rain descends, and the Winds blow, and the Floods beat upon this House, (which if not before, will certainly happen at the Hour of his death) the House must fall, and the fall thereof shall*

Wis. 5. 14.

See Prov.

10. 28.

Job 8. 13.

*shall be great.* Great, for the greatness and sadness of the Change; Great, for the Horrors which shall then assault him; Great, for the Miseries he shall then indure; Great, for the unspeakable Joys of Heaven lost; Great, for the Exquisite and Eternal Torments he shall then be cast into; Great, in every Respect, that can justify our Lord's Choice, of this Expression. And this is sufficient for the *First* Reason, why the Wicked Man's Hope must needs be vain, because the Object of it is no better than Vanity; for it is not placed in God, but in the World.

The *Second* is, that, though we should allow God to be really the Object of their Hope, yet is their Confidence altogether groundless, and not so properly Hope, as Presumption. For, as the Scripture distinguishes between a *dead* unprofitable Faith, which professes to believe, without practising accordingly, and a *lively* justifying Faith, which proves and exerts it self by Good Works; So are there likewise two sorts of Hope: The one of the truly virtuous Man, which is the fruit of a Good Life, and a Good Conscience; the other of the Wicked Man, which not having the Foundation of a Good Conscience, does not so truly hope, as without all Reason presume upon Things, to which it hath no Title or just Pretention. St. John hath stated this matter rightly, by saying, *Brethren, if our Hearts condemn us not, then have we Confidence towards God; that is, If the Sense of our own Guilt do not tell us, that we ought not to expect any Favour from him, whom we live in disobedience to. And again more fully in the Words next following, whatsoever we ask we receive of him, because we keep his Commandments,*  
and

1 Joh 3.21.

22.

and do those Things that are pleasing in his Sight. To the same purpose St. Paul, The End of the *1 Tim. 1.5.* Commandment is Charity, out of a pure Heart, and a Good Conscience, and Faith unfeigned. Which Passage St. Augustine so expounds in several parts of his Works, as from thence to argue, that there cannot be any true Hope, where there is not first a Good Conscience. St. Paul, says he, adds from a Good Conscience, Upon the *De doct. Christi. L. 1. c. 10.* account of a Christian's Hope, for he that carries within him the Reproach and Contradiction of an evil Conscience, despairs to attain the Things which he believes. And again. Every Man's Hope is in his own Conscience, and is proportioned, according as he feels himself to love God. And once more, The Apostle puts a Good Conscience for Hope, for he *In Pref. Psal. 31.* only, who hath a Good Conscience, can have the Hope of a Christian; where Men are stung with the Guilt of an evil Conscience, they are forsaken of Hope, and can have no other prospect than their own Damnation.. To this I might add many other Testimonies; and to the advantage of Good Men now under Consideration, as many other valuable Prerogatives; but I will only just touch upon Two or Three more, and then dismiss this Subject.

7. Of these, the *First* shall be, That most desirable Liberty which Good Men enjoy above the Wicked. This is the purport of our Saviour's Promise; If ye continue in my Word, then *Joh. 8.31;* are ye my Disciples indeed; and ye shall know the *32.* Truth, and the Truth shall make you free: So likewise St. Paul, Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there *2 Cor. 3. 17.* is Liberty. Now by this freedom is meant, a Deliverance from the Tyranny and Bondage of our sinful and sensual Appetites, called, for distinctions sake, the Inferiour part of the Soul.

To



To which the Wicked are more miserably enslaved, than any the most wretched Captive in this World, to the most barbarous and bloody Master. For to what end do they labour, and drudge, and break their Sleep? Is it not all in the service of Sensuality, and to gratify the meaner and brutal Passions of the Soul? The Man, that is overruled by any of these, how absolute a Drudge is he? The Lust of the Flesh, for instance, what a Tyranny does it exercise? Not only the Persons, who upon other accounts were by the Heathen worshipped as Gods, as *Jupiter*, and *Mars*, and *Hercules*, but, which is more authentick, the Strength of *Sampson*, the Sanctity of *David*, the Wisdom of *Solomon*, all truckled under this Usurpation. Nor is her Power and Cruelty less upon Christians, who have not shaken off this Yoke; The Adulteress, though she know the Shame, and Scandal, and danger of her Crime, the loss of God's Favour, the irreconcilable Hatred of her Husband, the Dishonour of her Family, the Prostitution of her Person, the Offence of all Good People, the Ruin of her Good Name, and Body, and Soul at once; Though she know, I say, all these to be the sure consequence of her Folly, yet this domineering Passion bears down all before it, and will be obeyed in despite of Reason, and the feeble pretences of Religion, to the contrary.

Nor is it in this single Point alone, that the dominion of Sense is so absolute; the Tyranny is universal, and holds in every other guilty Passion. The Ambitious and Vainglorious, pursues his Shadow of Honour and Fame, with the same Eagerness; he rises early, and goes to Bed late; Travels all Day, and beats his Brains all Night; flatters and dissembles, cringes in one Place,

Place, and looks big in another, makes Friends, and pacifies Enemies; brings every Action, every Design of his Life and Behaviour to bear down upon this own Point; and suffers no Time, though never so unseasonable, no Circumstance, though never so inconsiderable, no Project, though never so foreign, never so wicked, to pass him; provided his Ambition may be any way served by it.

The Covetous Man's Case is directly the same, and so is the Drunkard's, the Angry and Revengeful; and in a Word, Every Man breathing whose Passions have got the upper hand of his Reason. No Slave, that is chained in the Gallies, there to row for his Life, endureth so mercileſs a Captivity. His Prison and Fetters confine his Body only, but this Man's Mind is manacled and locked: His every Sense, his Thoughts, and Faculties are all bound up; and never was there a truer Maxim in the very utmost extent of the Words, than that of our Blessed Saviour, *He that committeth Sin is the servant of Sin*; For, as St. Peter observes, *of whom a Man is overcome; of the same is he brought into Bondage.* Joh 8. 34. 2Pet 2. 19.

Now from this Servitude the Righteous are delivered, by the prevailing power of Christ, and the mighty assistances of his Grace, so that they govern their Passions and Sensual Inclinations, instead of being governed by them. This is the spiritual importance of that Promise in Ezekiel, *They shall know that I am the Lord, when I have broken the Bands of their Yoke, and delivered them out of the Hand of those that served themselves of them.* Ezek. 34. 27. This the Benefit, which David seems to have had in view, when he makes that affectionate address, *Behold, O Lord, how that I am thy Servant; I am thy Servant, and the Son of* 16.

thine

Rom. 6.

*thine Handmaid; thou hast broken my Bones in sunder; therefore will I offer unto thee the Sacrifice of Thanksgiving.* And St. Paul yet more expressly, according to the Genius of the Evangelical Style, says, *Our Old Man is Crucified, that the body of Sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should no more serve Sin.* By the *Old Man* and the *Body of Sin*, understanding that original Concupiscence, which lurks in all our Hearts, and prompts us to Wickedness; and by the *Crucifixion* and *Destruction* of this such a Subduing and Mortifying of this, evil Principle, that we do not obey its irregular Motions, but by the Grace of God, are so entirely superiour to them, as if it did not subsist or act in us at all.

Isa 57. 20.  
Jam. 4.

8. Upon this Priviledge of Liberty, there naturally follows another, which is Great Peace, and Calmness, and orderly composure of Mind; Whereas the Wicked are perfectly over-run with intestine War, and Confusion. And therefore, by the Prophet, resembled a *troubled Sea, whose Waters cast up Mire and Dirt*; and, by St. James, to a City whose Inhabitants are all up in a Mutiny, and divided into Parties and Factions among themselves. So that, while Good Men are serene and quiet within, and act with great Tranquility and Consistence with themselves, because they are governed by the one, steady and uniform Principle of Reason, reduced to the obedience of God's Law; The Wicked are distracted and perplexed, like a Ship tossed and driven too and fro with violent and contrary Winds. For these Lusts of Concupiscence are many and almost infinite, and these pursue infinite Objects, and are never satisfied, but perpetually crying out *Give, Give*. For, when is the Ambitious contented with Honour, or the

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Incontinent with Carnality, or the Covetous with Wealth? So that a Man in the midst of these, is like a Parent among a great Family of Children, calling for more Meat than can be had, to supply their hunger. Clamours and Importunities pierce his Ears on every side, and he is not able to gratify the least of those Wants or Requests, with which he is Teized and Tormented. But besides, that these Desires are insatiable, and not to be quieted though we could attend to each of them distinctly; They are also very often contrary to one another, and so opposite in their Demands, that it is not possible to comply with one, without at the same contradicting another: and all *Babel* is in the unmortified Man's Breast, in its utmost Perfection. Thus vain Thirst of Honour cries, *Spend Liberally*, and Covetousness calls out, *Spare all you can*; Lasciviousness says, *Venture for Pleasure*, Pride replies *Pleasure is bought too dear with shame*. Anger pushes on to Revenge; Ambition persuades to dissemble an Injury, rather than make an Enemy. In a Word, here the Prophet's remark is accomplished, *I have spied Unrighteousness and Strife in the City*. *Unrighteousness*, because none of these Suggestions are from a Good Principle; and *Strife*, because they are full of Contradiction, and not to be reconciled with one another. And from this Confusion nothing can deliver us, but that Peace of God, which Religion alone can give, alone can taste. And who now can doubt the Truth of our Lord, when he calls his Yoke easy, and his burden Light; since the assistance of Grace, the Love of God, an enlightened Understanding, internal Consolation, a quiet Conscience, a cheerful Hope, perfect freedom of Soul, calmness and confidence of

Mind, all conspire to render a virtuous Life easy and pleasant; Who can justly complain of uneasiness, who hath all these comforts to sustain and cheer his Heart?

I cannot let this Argument go, without desiring thee once more to reflect, upon what in part hath been spoken to already. The different Expectations of good and evil Men. How unspeakable support the one must needs find from an assured expectation of eternal Glory and Happiness; how many sad girds the other can not but feel from the apprehension of Damnation and everlasting Torments in Hell. Were this alone the matter in difference betwixt them; How would the painfullest Life be softened by that Hope? How would the most exquisite Pleasures of Sin and Sense be embittered by these Fears? The Labourer encourages himself to bear the toil and heat of the Day, by the thoughts of his pay at Night. If Two Men were upon the Road together toward their own Country; The one called Home to be advanced and rewarded; the other to be arraigned and put to Death; do we suppose these Men could behave themselves alike, or be equally pleasant in their passage? Whatever Face the Malefactor might put upon the Matter, there is no doubt; but his Heart would give him many a twinge, and feel now and then a cold Qualm come over it, notwithstanding all his counterfeit Mirth. And this, to be sure is the Condition of Wicked Men, when Death and a future State present themselves to their Thoughts. How differently must a Good Man think of leaving the World, which is his Prison, and place of Suffering, when he exchanges this Life for one of Joy, and Bliss inestimable? But how

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melancholy and dismal are the Presages and Approaches of that fatal Hour, which must certainly and shortly come? What a Heart-breaking is every Remembrance of it to them, who, when *they die their Expectation perishes*; who are not only to hope for nothing better hereafter, but to endure a great deal more and worse, than was possible for them either to feel, or to conceive here?

If then these Things be so, what should stop any Reader from taking up, now at least, that Holy Resolution, to which I am all this while endeavouring to gain him over? Will he still persist in objecting the difficulty of the Attempt, and the unpleasantness of the Way? Will he believe other People, who tell him so, though they have never made the Experiment, nor know any thing of the Matter? Methinks he should rather believe the Declarations of his Lord and Saviour, affirming the contrary; Believe his own Reason, which upon a fair weighing the several Arguments already produced, and the quality of those Ingredients, which make up the Happiness of Virtue, will cast the Scale on that side; Believe the Testimonies of Holy and Excellent Persons, who speak from their own Personal Knowledge, and long Experience: Such as *David*, *St. Paul*, and *St. John*, heretofore; And many hundreds more, which, by the Grace of God, are converted daily from a vicious Life, and the captivity of Satan; to the Love and Practice of Virtue, and the Glorious Liberty of the Children of Light. For even this Age, profligate and exceeding perverse though it be, yet wants not the Instances of many happy Souls, who bear Testimony to this Truth, and rejoyce in the Comforts of Holiness,

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ness, and proclaim with Thankfulness their own Felicity; Not only, that what I have said is true to the uttermost, but that they feel more inward Peace, and sweet Satisfaction in the Ways of Godliness, than I, or any Tongue living, ever hath said, or ever can say in the Matter.

It is indeed a mighty Change, which is wrought in the Conversion of a Sinner; that Pride should be turned into Humility, Covetousness, into contempt of the World; Luxury and Lasciviousness, into Mortification and Purity; Revenge and Anger, into Meekness and Charity; in short, that the Man should no longer be the same, but in Affections, Temper, and Delights, just the Reverse of what he was before; and all this too, by that Alteration, to which his own Will must concur. These are Effects, which, it is not to be wondred, if some Men think impossible; and in that Thought never attempt this Change. But this hath been the Case, and these the Doubts, of many Holy and excellent Men, \* who yet upon Tryal have found the Grace of God able to conquer all Difficulties; and have taken marvellous Delight in those Things, to which the vicious Courses of their former Lives had once rendred them most averse: They have found that very feasible, which they esteemed utterly impracticable; and have been transported with such abundance of Joy, that their Hearts have scarce been able to contain, to bear it. And therefore, I would beg thee to make the Experiment. Much may be gained, but nothing can be lost by it. The Matter is of vast importance, and worth venturing for; And, if thou succeed; as certainly succeed thou wilt, if thy Resoluti-

\* See Cypr.  
l. 1. Ep. 1.  
ad Donat.  
Augustin  
Conf. l. 6.  
c. 12, 13,  
14, 15.

as be sincere and vigorous, thou art certain to gain as much as the immortal Happiness of thy Soul, and all the Glories of a Heavenly Kingdom are worth. And who in Matters of less Moment, declines such a venture, where the Advantage is inestimably great, and the hazard is so small, indeed is none at all?

S E C T. III.

*A necessary Caution to such as attempt this Change.*

ONE thing is necessary to be premised here, in order to the preventing all Discouragements, that may arise, to Them who shall comply with this Advice. Which is, that This, like all other great Alterations, will require time to render it easy to us. A Man must not depend upon all these Joys at his first setting out, but ought to prepare himself for strong encounters, much Reluctancy, sharp Temptations, and violent Conflicts with himself for a time. It was the Son of Sirach's Counsel: *My Son, if thou come to serve the Lord, prepare thy Soul for Temptation. Set thy heart aright, and constantly endure, and be not impatient in time of trouble.* Ecclus. 2, 1, 2. The reason of This is very obvious. For, while the Devil keeps quiet Possession, he hath nothing to do, but to sooth and lay the Man asleep, by suggesting fresh Delights perpetually, and Ministring to carnal and worldly Satisfaction. But, when he sees him attempting to break loose, and make an escape from his Snares, then he begins to rage, and tries all means possible to maintain his usurped Dominion over him. In this he resembles the Spirit

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Mat. 9.

dispossest by our Lord, immediately after his Transfiguration. It was Dumb and Deaf, while let alone, but when commanded to go out, it began to roar and foam, and tore the Body, leaving it for dead. Thus *Laban* concealed his Envy to *Jacob*, and never persecuted him, till he had resolved to depart. And *Pharaoh* doubled his Tyranny upon the Childre<sup>n</sup> of *Israel*, when he perceived them disposed to quit his Country. And their deliverance from the Bondage of *Egypt* hath always been understood, as a Type and Image of the Deliverance of Souls, from the slavery of Sin and Satan.

St. *Augustine* was in this particular a very lively Example of the methods, by which great Sinners are brought over from Vice to Virtue. The account given of his own Conversion, in his Books of *Confessions*, is well worth our serious Perusal, and capable of Ministering greatly to our Comfort and Instruction. There we shall find the sore and long Combats with his Ghostly Enemy, before he could get clear of him, so much the forer and longer as he was afterwards a brighter Light in the Church of God. And this may well animate those, who feel violent Oppositions to their Amendment, because it is a sign of more plentiful Measures of Grace, and glorious Things, which God intends to do by Them, if they have the Courage manfully to go through with their good Intentions. St. *Paul's* Conversion hath greater marks of Violence in it, than any other we read of; he was struck Blind, he was cast down to the Ground, he was stunned with Thunder. And Why all this, but because he

Act. 9, 22, *was a chosen Vessel to bear Christ's Name to the Gentiles,*  
25.

*Gentiles, and to suffer many and great things for his Sake?*

There again we see an eminent Instance of the Omnipotence of God, in reforming a Person of strong, and once most ungoverned Passions, of confirmed Habits in the very Worst, and such as are commonly reputed the most incurable Diseases. Such as Ambition, Avarice, Uncleanneſs, and many others which the Patient himself before his Conversion, thought it altogether impossible to ſubdue. There again we have not only an entire Victory over theſe Paſſions, but much more Charms and ſenſible Delight in the Conqueſt, than ever there had been before in the Gratification of them. Laſtly, here we may obſerve in this holy Man's Example, a Pattern for our Inſtruction and Imitation. In examining, and furthering our Call, by reading Good Books, conſerring with Good Men, applying our ſelves to the ſtudy of the Holy Scriptures, hearkening and opening to Chriſt, when he knocks at the Door of our Hearts, praying and weeping, and private Meditation; deteſting and avoiding all wicked Suggeſtions, which would diſſwade us from a Compliance with the Motions of God's Good Spirit; and, upon conviction what he would have us to do, breaking off from the World and its Vanities, and betaking our ſelves to our Duty, without any manner of delay. Theſe are the things that qualify Men for Spiritual Conſolation and Delight, and all they, who behave themſelves according to this Rule, ſhall be ſure to find it, if not in the higheſt Perfection that a mortal State is capable of, yet, to be ſure, in ſuch a Meaſure, as the preſent Condition of their Souls requires.

And therefore, upon this occasion, I must advise my Reader to quit himself like a Man, and not spare himself at the beginning. The Corruption of Nature asks some Violence to bring it under ; and our Passions, like fire, must be plyed close, and rushed upon at once, if we would put them out effectually. I will conclude this Matter with a Passage of *St. Bernard*, describing both the Methods, and the happy Effects of Reformation, in terms very applicable to our present purpose, “ Christ, “ says he, calls to us, *Take my Yoke upon you,* “ *and ye shall find rest to your Souls.* This Invitation is strange and new, but it is made by “ One who makes all things new. He that “ takes a Yoke upon him finds rest. He that “ leaves all, gains a hundred times as much. So, “ in the Old Testament, God said to *Abraham,* “ *Sacrifice thy Son whom thou lovest, and thus shall* “ *all Nations be blessed in thy Seed.* In offering “ *Isaac* he did not kill, but sanctify him. If “ then thou art called upon to offer up thy “ *Isaac*, thy Joy and Delight, be not afraid to “ obey the Command. Whatsoever construction Nature may put upon the Matter, depend upon the Promise. The Ram, and not “ *Isaac* shall die ; Thy true Joy shall not perish, “ but thy depraved Affection ; whose Horns “ are entangled in the Thicket, and cannot “ continue in thee without great Allay, and “ much Anxiety. God proves thy Sincerity, “ and thy Love for him, as he did *Abraham’s* “ *Isaac* thy Spiritual Delight shall live ; only “ this must be bound upon the Wood, that “ thou mayest Glory, not in thy own Flesh, “ but in the Cross of thy Lord ; by whom thou “ art Crucified indeed, but crucified to the “ World:

*“ World: For unto God thou livest still, and  
“ livest much more truly than thou didst before.  
And so much for the Second hindrance to Holy  
Resolution.*

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C H A P. III.

*The Third Obstruction considered. Fear  
of Persecution and Affliction.*

FROM the Consideration of that inward Peacefulness and mighty Satisfaction, which the former Chapter hath proved to be the Portion of the Godly, in Opposition to that Uneasiness falsely charged upon Virtue, by those that are unacquainted with it; It is fit we now proceed to consider the Afflictions of Good Men. For it is very possible, that Some, who are convinced of the pleasurable-ness and true content of a Holy Conversation, so far as the practice of Religion it self is concerned, may, yet think it hard to accept it with the Incumbrance of Persecution, or Affliction; and esteem themselves, not excusable only, but Men prudent and well advised, if they decline resolving to live well, at such times, and in such Circumstances, when they are certain to suffer for so doing. Now this Difficulty indeed is as mere a Pretence as either of the former; For, *First*, it stands upon a false Bottom, and then, from that supposed Ground it draws a false Consequence. The Ground it proceeds upon is this, That a Man may live virtuously and serve God very well, in some Cases, and yet enjoy his Worldly Ease at the same time,

time, without any Molestation, or suffering at all. And this I call a false Ground, because, though outward Persecutions and Afflictions are limited to Times and Places, and more or less in some than in others, yet is there no Season, no part of the World, in which Religious Men do not meet with some Contradiction and Trouble, both External and Internal. And, though the Comforts and Assistances they receive from God, are much more than a Counterballance to their Troubles, and even sweeten their bitterest Cup; yet are those Troubles in themselves both numerous and weighty, and such they prove, when they fall with their full Force upon the Wicked and Impatient, who want the supports peculiar to the Godly.—The Inference deduced from this Ground is likewise unjust. For it supposes Suffering to be a good Reason for declining the Service of God, whereas, in Truth, God ordains and makes use of This as a means of drawing us closer to Him, and weaning our Affections from the World. I shall therefore, for the setting this Matter in its true Light, branch out my present Discourse into four Particulars. *First*, I will enquire, whether it be usual for all good Men, in order to Salvation, to suffer some kind of Trouble and Persecution, that is, whether this be appointed by God, as an ordinary Instrument of bringing Men to perfect Holiness here, and Happiness hereafter. *Secondly*, I shall examine into the Reasons, why God, who loves good Men so tenderly, does yet choose to exercise them after this manner. *Thirdly*, I shall shew, what Grounds of Comfort and Contentedness a good Man may have in the midst of such Troubles; and *Fourthly*, How such Persons

sons ought to behave themselves, when it shall please God to permit Afflictions to fall upon them. All which, taken together will, I doubt not give every unprejudiced Reader Satisfaction in this Point, and remove those Scruples, which this Objection is apt to raise in his Mind.

SECT. I.

*Whether Suffering be the Lot of all Good Men.*

OF this, one would imagine, there should need little Proof, after our Blessed Saviour hath so solemnly warned his Disciples, and in Them all his faithful Servants, that *in the* John 16. *world they shall have Tribulation*; And accordingly, hath commanded them to *possess their Souls* Luke 21. *in patience*, that is, to provide for the bearing Adversities with Constancy, and a firm Resolution. St. Paul declares without Exception, that *all who will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.* And, that we *must through much* Acts 14. *tribulation enter into the kingdom of God*, as if there were no other way to come at that Kingdom, but This. We are likewise told, that *whom God loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every* Heb. 12. *Son whom he receiveth*; Nay, the Matter is carried so far, as to make the Freedom from Troubles, a very suspicious sign, that we are not true Children: It is said again, that *if we suffer with Christ we shall also reign with him*, as if the former were an indispensable Condition of the latter; And, when David, in concurrence with all these Testimonies, observes, that *great are* Psal. 34. *the troubles of the righteous*, we have reason from the whole to conclude, that Troubles are the distinguishing Character, which God's Beloved Children

Children are to be known and discerned by.

This Truth, though but little understood, and less considered, by the Men of the World, is implied, and differently intimated to us, throughout the whole Course of the Scriptures.

Mat. 10. Thus our Saviour declares, *He came not to send*

2 Tim. 2. *Peace, but a Sword*, and St. Paul, that *no man can be crowned except he fight lawfully*, but all Fighting implies Opposition, and Difficulty, and an Enemy to grapple with. To the same

Rev. 2. purpose the *Hidden Manna*, (Heaven and its Joys) is said to be reserved for *Him that over-*

Mat. 8. *cometh*. The Ship, in which Christ and his Disciples were overtaken with a Storm, hath ever been esteem'd a lively Emblem, of those Troubles and Afflictions, with which all that Embark with Him in the Service of God, are tost upon the Waves of this Tempestuous World. Thus

Job 7. 14. again our Life is styled a *Warfare upon Earth*, and *Man's days* said to be *few and full of Misery*. Of which that single proof is Evidence sufficient, that, since the Fall, God hath appointed the Pains of Death, as an unavoidable Passage to the Regions of Joy: And the infinite Contradictions and Troubles, both from within and without, bring the Truth of all the former Texts home to every Man's own Sense and Experience. Within are the rebellious Motions of depraved Appetite, and those strugglings of the Mind, which keep up a perpetual Sedition in our Breasts, and make them always the Seat of War. Without, we have the World and the Devil, ever assailing us, by all manner of means; sometimes flattering us with deceitful Promises; sometimes terrifying us with angry Menaces; sometimes playing the part of fair and open Enemies; at Others, betraying us in the

the disguise of treacherous Friends. And it is the Christian's proper Business, to contend with all these manfully; for upon his Perseverance and Victory depends the Crown of everlasting Salvation.

That This in Fact hath always been so, the Examples of the most renowned Saints, from the beginning of the World, abundantly testify. These all, as Partakers of Original Sin, were not only attacked perpetually by, from their own inward Corruptions, but from without, by great variety of Afflictions. Thus *Abel*, <sup>Gen. 4,</sup> for his sincere and acceptable Service of God, <sup>12, &c.</sup> was murdered by his wicked Brother; and *Abraham*, the chosen of the Lord, was exposed to many Hardships and Dangers. His Posterity, who were God's peculiar, were *Abraham's* Children in Affliction too; and the Blood of the Prophets from Age to Age, was shed on every side of *Jerusalem*. The Sufferings of *Job* are very wonderful, and yet these came by God's special Appointment; notwithstanding the Testimony himself gave of him, that he *was* <sup>Job 1. 2.</sup> *perfect and upright, and so just that there was none like him in all the Earth.* I might instance in *David*, and some others particularly, but that the Apostle's Account of the Saints under the Old Testament may very well serve for all; who tells us; *they were tortured, they were mocked, they were scourged, they were imprisoned, they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were slain with the sword, they wandered about in sheep-skins, and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented; they wandered about in deserts, and mountains, and dens, and caves of the Earth; and yet these are the Persons, of whom the world was not worthy.* And the reason why they were not delivered from



from these Miseries, was that their Resurrection and future Reward might be the more glorious for enduring them. This was the Case of the best Men under the Old Testament.

- The New is expressly founded upon the Cross.
- Heb. 2. The Captain of our Salvation was made perfect through Sufferings; and it behoved him, as himself
- Luke 24. affirms, to endure many things, and so to enter into his Glory. Since then our Lord hath told
- John 15. us, that the Servant is not above his Master, we have reason to conclude, that They, who partake of his Glory, must expect to bear a part in his Sufferings too. And thus it happened to his dearest Friends. Of his Mother *Simeon*, prophesied, that a Sword should pierce through her Soul. And of the Apostles, we have undeniable proof, that their Labours and Sufferings, their Persecutions and Necessities, were infinite; and to mere Flesh and Blood insupportable: After all which it pleased God to require their Blood to be spent in his Service. Thus not one of them died a Natural Death, St. John only excepted, and He came not behind the rest in Sufferings, though his Life were preserved by Miracle from those that sought it. His Exile into *Patmos*, and his Caldron of scalding Oyl, abundantly made good the Prediction of our Lord concerning Him, and his Brother James, that they should indeed drink of the Cup
- Tertul. de præscip. Hieron. contra Jovin. Matth. 20. he drank of, and be baptized with the Baptism that he was baptized with. But, why should I insist upon particular Examples, when Christ himself hath laid down this general Rule, that if any man do not take up his Cross and follow him, he cannot be his Disciple? Which plainly intimates that every Man will meet with Afflictions of his own, to exercise his Meekness and Patience; and
- Luke 14.

and that the following his Leader, in these Virtues is the only method, by which Salvation can be had.

But here it may be urged, that the Matter cannot possibly be, as we have represented it. For, if no Man can be saved without Affliction and Tribulation; what then will become of all those, who live in times of publick Peace and Prosperity, and in Places, where Religion is so far from being persecuted, that the Civil Sanctions do their utmost to encourage and promote it? To this I answer, *First*, That allowing there should be any such time and place, where the practice of Goodness meets with no Opposition or Disturbance from without; yet the Persons who live in it are but in so much greater Danger. The effects of Prosperity described by the Prophet upon wicked Men; having too frequent and natural Influence even upon otherwise virtuous Dispositions. That *when people are not plagued like their Neighbours, Psal. 73. we come into any misfortune like other Men, Pride usually compasses them about as a Chain, and violence covers them as a Garment. Their Eyes swell with fatness, and they follow the lusts of their own Heart.* So that their Virtue in such Circumstances runs a much greater Hazard, than it would in a season of Distress. But my *Second* answer is, that there never was, nor will be any time, so void of Troubles as not to furnish a Cross, for those Disciples of Christ, who are content to take it up. Are there not always Poverty, or Sicknes, or Calumny, or Spight, or Injuries, or Contradictions, or some other Evil of this kind offered to good Men continually? Do there ever want such ill-disposed Wretches as the *Psalmist* complains of,  
who

who render peaceable and virtuous People,  
 Psal. 109. *Evil for Good, and Hatred for their Goodwill?*

Are we not always pestered even with Foes of our own Household, Kindred, or Acquaintance, that obstruct our best Designs, and draw us off, or cool us at least, when we set our selves most zealously to the Service of Almighty God? But, if there were none of all these, yet is any Man exempted from disorderly Affections, the most dangerous Enemies of all the rest, and such, as it is not possible to have any Truce with? Is there a Day, an Hour, an Instant, when some Temptation or other, of the World, or the Devil, is not making attempts upon us: Attempts which it is much more difficult to secure our selves from in times of Peace and Wealth, than in the forest Adversity, or hottest Persecution? For the Fable of the Sun and the Wind give us a very just Representation of all Mankind; many more whereof perish by Flattery, than by Force. We see how gallantly *David* acquitted himself against the most furious Assaults of Adversity, and yet how infamously he was Baffled in a prosperous Condition. So that there needs no publick Calamities, to render the good Man's Life a State of Tribulation; his Virtues will be obstructed and resisted more than enough, without being openly, Persecuted; and the profoundest Peace abroad will not put an end to that perpetual War he hath to wage at home. When outward Opposition ceases, the inward is left still, and often grows more furious, and more troublesome upon these Occasions, So that Afflictions and Crosses will constantly await us; And the *First* point is evident, which asserts these, to be the lot of every Disciple of Christ Jesus.

## SECT. III.

*The Reasons, for which God, notwithstanding his Love for Good Men, suffers them to be thus afflicted.*

NOW here, it ought to be a sufficient Satisfaction to us, that Almighty God, in his infinite Wisdom, hath thought fit thus to order the Matter. For we may be sure, that whatever Expedients he pitches upon, they are always the most proper for the Purposes he intends them to serve. And since he hath given us the Hope and Prospect of so excellent and glorious a Reward, it is but reasonable, that our short Labours and Sufferings in this present State, should prove us worthy of his Favour, and the inestimable Benefits prepared for us hereafter. But we need not rest here; For God hath not only declared to us his Will, but several weighty Reasons, which determin him to it. And therefore, for our farther encouragement, I shall here mention some, which may abundantly convince Men of his Fatherly Care and Goodness, even toward those, who are most grievously afflicted, during their passage through this Valley of Tears.

1. And *First*, This Dispensation is therefore highly reasonable, because it increases our Virtue in this Life, and by consequence our Glory in the next; The measure whereof depends upon the Degree of our Desert here. For his Justice and Wisdom having determined, that none shall be crowned but they who fight; the sharper those combats are, in which, by the assistance of his Grace, we come off Conquerours,

the brighter will be that Crown laid up for us at the Resurrection of the Just. This is *St. Paul's* meaning, when he speaks of some, who would not accept Deliverance, that they might obtain a better Resurrection. And our blessed Lord's, in pronouncing those Happy, who are persecuted for Righteousness sake, because theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. And again, Blessed are ye, when Men shall revile you, and persecute you, and speak all manner of Evil against you falsely, for my Name's sake; Rejoyce and be exceeding glad, for great is your Reward in Heaven. This is the true importance, of saving our Life by losing it, and receiving an Hundred Fold, for all the Advantages his Disciples had quitted upon his account. Hence are those Promises to voluntary Poverty, and renouncing our own Will, in obedience to Christ's: All which are great Conflicts against the World, and our own sensual Inclinations; And cannot be performed, without much Suffering, and very sensible Affliction. In a word, This Argument is the substance of that Text in *St. Paul*, that these light Afflictions, which are but for a Moment, work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of Glory.

2 Cor. 4.  
17.

Jam. 4.

Luke 15.

2. Another Reason for this dispensation is, to draw us, by this Means, from the Love of the World, which, as *St. James* observes, is Enmity with God. He weans us by embittering our Delights, and uses the same Method of calling us to himself, which Providence did to the Prodigal Son, who entertained no Thoughts of returning to his Father, and his Duty, till Famine and Want had reduced him to feed upon Husks with Swine.

3. Thirdly, Affliction is a most admirable Medicine, for healing our Spiritual Diseases, and re-

restoring those to Health, whom gentler Applications would have no effectual Operation upon. This opens our Eyes, and works off those Scales of Spiritual Blindness, contracted by long Ease, and uninterrupted Prosperity. Thus the Scripture takes notice that *the Rod and* Prov. 29. *Reproof give Wisdom*, And furnishes us with many Examples to this purpose. It is a most remarkable passage concerning *Joseph's Brethren*; Who seem to have made no Reflections upon their Barbarity to him for many Years together, till Famine, and their rough Treatment in *Egypt*, awakened them into remorse; and upon this Occasion they presently fall to accusing themselves, and acknowledge the Justice of Providence in avenging this unnatural Offence at the distance of many Years; Then *they said one to another*, Gen. 42. *We are verily guilty concerning our Brother, in that we saw the anguish of his Soul, when he besought us and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us.* And as Tribulation enlightens us, and brings us to a sight of our faults; so is it a great healp to the removing and curing them. This Rod is like that which *Moses* smote the Rock with; It softens our stony Hearts, and makes the Tears of Repentance gush out in great Abundance. Hence we find it compared to a File, that scours off the Rust of the Soul; Job 23. 10. to a sharp Remedy, that cleanses Wounds from Prov. 20. Corruption; to Fire, that purges the Gold from 30. its Dross: For such, in effect, are Pride, Isa. 1. 25. and Vainglory, Anger and Sloth, Effeminacy, Jer. 9. 7. and Luxury, and a Thousand more, which Prosperity contracts, but the Furnace of Afflictions Zech. 13. 9. thoroughly purges away.

4. As Tribulation is a very excellent Remedy to take away the Guilt and malignity of Sins

past; So is it likewise an admirable Preservative against contracting the like Guilt in time to come. It makes Men sensible whom they have offended, how dangerous it is to provoke the Anger of God, how fearful a Thing to fall into his Hands. And consequently, it makes them watchful and wary in their Behaviour, and careful of ever step they take. This

*Psal. 119. David confirms by his own Experience, It is Good for me to have been afflicted, that I might learn thy Statutes. Before I was troubled I went wrong, but now have I kept thy Law.*

5. And this leads us to another very kind Reason, which moves Almighty God to deal after this manner with his chosen, and very dear Children; that so by chastising their Sins in this Life, and drawing them to Amendment by his Severity, and the Warning taken upon it, they may escape the infinitely more dreadful Punishments of another State. This is expressly the Account rendred by *St. Paul* of some temporal Afflictions, which fell upon the Church at *Corinth*; *When we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the World.*

*1 Cor. 11.  
32.*

6. A Sixth Motive to this Course is, that God by Affliction may try his Servants, and bring their Sincerity to the Proof; that so themselves and others may be made sensible, out of what Principle they serve God, and how faithful, or how fickle, their Virtue is. This was directly the Case of *Abraham*, to whom God gave that harsh Command of sacrificing his Son, as a Test of his Faith; and to see, whether any thing though never so dear, would stand in competition with his Love, and obedience to his God. The same account *Moses* gives of the

*Gen. 22.*

long

long sojourning of the *Israelites*, before they were admitted to the Land of Promise. *The Deut. 8. 2*  
*Lord thy God led thee these Forty Years in the Wil-*  
*derness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know*  
*what was in thy Heart, whether thou wouldst keep*  
*his Commandments or no.* And again, with re-  
 gard to his permitting the Seducements of false  
 Prophets, *The Lord your God proveth you, to Deut. 13. 3.*  
*know whether ye Love the Lord your God with all*  
*your Heart, and with all your Soul:* And in like  
 manner, God is said to have left *Hezekiah* for a *2Chro. 32.*  
 Season, to try him, that he might know all that was *31.*  
 in his Heart. Thus *David*, *Thou O God hast Psal. 66.*  
 proved us, thou hast tryed us, as *Silver* is tryed: *10.*  
*Thou broughdest us into the Snare, and laidst Trou-*  
*ble upon our Loyns.* And how well he was con-  
 tented with this sort of Proof, appears from  
 his praying in another place, that God would  
 examin and prove him, search out his Reins and his *Psal. 24. 2.*  
 Heart, to see whether he were stanch and  
 found at the bottom, and would stick to him in  
 Adversity or not. This was one great End of  
*Job's* Affliction, and is indeed that which makes  
 wonderful Discoveries; There being (as our  
 Lord observes in the Parable of the Sower) *Luk 8. 7.*  
 many a Specious Virtue, that carries a good  
 Face, and yet in time of Temptation, falls away.

7. A Seventh Reason for afflicting Virtuous  
 and Holy Men is, to shew them their absolute  
 dependance upon God, and drive them to seek  
 Comfort and Succour from him, where alone  
 they can be had. And this is a very usual and a ve-  
 ry natural Effect of Trouble, *in their affliction they* *Hos. 5. 15.*  
*will seek me early,* says he by his Prophet. And  
 so *David*, in great Charity, prays for his Ene-  
 mies, *Make their Faces ashamed O Lord, that they* *Psal 83. 1.*  
*may seek thy Name.* For can there be a shrewd-



er Sign of Men's being utterly lost, and given up to a Reprobate Sense, than their not being drawn with these Cords of Affliction : of which we find lamentable Complaints in the Prophet *Jeremy*, *In vain have I smitten your Children, they received no Correction: And again, Thou hast stricken them; but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive Correction; they have made their Faces harder than a Rock, they have refused to return; they have altogether broken the Yoke, and burst the Bonds.* Intimating that this was the last Experiment, that could be made upon them; and if this made no Impression, they must be given over for impenetrable, incorrigible, Wretches.

8. Another account of God's afflicting his Servants may be the gaining an opportunity of more visibly exerting his Power and Goodness, in their deliverance. For, as among Men, a Noble Mind covets nothing more earnestly, than some very eminent Occasion of testifying the Kindness he professes to his Friend, and at once to evidence both his Ability, and Inclination, to do him Service; so God Almighty, who hath all Events in his own disposal, and whose Goodness infinitely excels that of the most generous and affectionate Friend, orders Matters so, as to make the Distresses of his Servants serviceable to the exercise of this beneficent Disposition. Such were the Testimonies he gave to the *Three Children* in the fiery Furnace; to *Daniel* in the Den of Lions; to *Joseph* in the Dungeon, and to *Job*, in the extremity of his Misery. And therefore did Christ, not only suffer the Ship, in which he sailed with his Disciples, to be overtaken with a Storm, but slept till it was even covered with the Waves; that is, deferred his affli-

Jer. 2. 30.

V. 2, 3.

Dan 3. &amp; 6.

Gen. 39.

Job 42.

Assistance, till they were reduced to the very last Mat. 8. &  
 Gasp. Thus again did he permit *St. Peter* to <sup>14.</sup>  
 sink, when attempting to walk upon the Sea;  
 That, the more imminent the Danger was, the  
 more conspicuous his Power and Goodness,  
 might be, which so seasonably, and yet so ef-  
 fectually, rescued them out of it.

Strong Impressions are not left upon our  
 Hearts, except when some very sensible and  
 great Change is wrought in our Affairs; and  
 our Joys for escapes always hold proportion,  
 with the Fears and the Calamities we are deli-  
 vered from. Rest to a Labourer is grateful,  
 according as he is weary with Toil; and a  
 Calm Sea infinitely more pleasant after a Tem-  
 pest: Hence our Saviour sustains his Disciples,  
 with a promise, that their *Sorrow shall be turned* Joh. 16.  
*into Joy*; and *David* magnifies the Comforts of <sup>23.</sup>  
 God's support, by saying, that this *was present*  
*with him in the Vale of the Shadow of Death*; and, Psal. 23,  
*I will be glad and rejoyce in thy Mercy, for thou hast* & 30. 7.  
*considered my Trouble, and hast known my Soul in*  
*Adversities.* It is therefore a Mercy to afflict us,  
 because this adds to our Joy, and renders our  
 Sense of God's Goodness, and our own Satis-  
 faction in the escape, much more delightful,  
 than it could possibly have been, if we had ne-  
 ver smarted and grieved at all.

It likewise disposes us more to Thankfulness,  
 and to proclaim this Goodness of our Heavenly  
 Father more eagerly, more publickly, after that  
 Holy Man's Example, *I will sing of thy Power,* Psal 59.  
*yea I will sing aloud of thy Mercy in the Morning,* 16, 17.  
*because thou hast been my Defence and Refuge in the*  
*Day of my Trouble. Unto thee, O my Strength will*  
*I sing! for God is my Defence, and the God of my*  
*Mercy.* Accordingly we find, that most of

those noble and Affectionate Hymns of Praise, were composed upon occasion of some eminent Deliverance : This tuned the Harps of *Moses*, and *Deborah*, and *Hannah*, and *David*, and *Hezekiah*, and others, who all mingle the tenderest Remembrances of their past Afflictions, with the acknowledgment of their present Blessings. And, as God's Glory is thus published by our Praises, so this is one of the great Ends, by which he designs the advancement of his Honour ; and a Tribute required from us ; Call upon me, says he, *in the Day of Trouble*, so will I hear thee, and thou shalt praise me : And again in the same Psalm, *Whoso offereth me Thanks and Praise, he it is that honoureth me.*

Psal. 50.  
15, &

v. 23.

Farther yet. By Persecution and Affliction, and the experience of his Goodness under them, God designs to confirm and embolden us, in his Service ; That we may be encouraged to constancy in our Obedience, and not dismayed or terrified in difficulties ; when we reflect, how powerful and present a Helper and Protector we have, in all that we call upon him for. And this Reason moves him sometimes, not only to inflict, but to lengthen our Sufferings : It being natural for Time and Custom to render Things, that were very terrible at first, very supportable, and by degrees familiar to us. Till this be done, our Troubles have not answered their End. And therefore it is observable, that St. Peter does not pray for an immediate and speedy Deliverance of the Persons he writes to ; but, that God would give it when he had first fitted them to receive it to their true Advantage ; *The God of all Grace*, says he, *who hath called us into his eternal Glory, by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.*

1 Pet. 5. 10.

And

And this indeed is the peculiar excellence of Affliction, that it contributes greatly to the Exercise and Increase of all those Virtues and Graces, wherein Christian Perfection consists. It strengthens our *Faith*, by awakening us into a Consideration of the wise Reasons, why God permits these Hardships, and presenting to us the precious Promises of his present Assistance, and our future Reward. It confirms our *Hope*, by the Experience of his Power and Goodness; and puts *David's Song* into our Mouths, *God is* Psal. 46. *our Refuge and Strength, a very present help in Trouble; Therefore will we not fear, though the Earth be moved, and though the Hills be carried into the midst of the Sea, &c.* And, which is yet of more valuable consideration; It assures us, that God will not forget our labour of Love, but that they, who suffer with him, shall most certainly reign with him. Thus lifting us above the World and all that it can do to us, while fixing our Eyes upon Objects certain, though Distant and Eternal; it exercises and enflames our *Charity*, by reviving in us the Remembrance and the Love of Christ, while conforming us to his Example, and rendring us highly contented to suffer for His sake, who condescended to endure infinitely more for Ours. It teaches us Prudence and Discretion in our Behaviour, Temperance and Moderation in our Passions and Desires, and most lawful Enjoyments: Fortitude in bearing and being inured to Difficulties; It promotes Repentance and Sorrow for Sin, by making us sick of that bitter Root whence all our Sufferings spring: It brings down our haughty Spirits, and inspires Humility, and Meekness, and Patience; In a word, it resembles us to the Captain of our Salvation,

Ila. 53.

vation, and sets us in the Way he trod before us, whose Character was, *A Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with Grief*: and so makes us *Crucified Christians*, the best Estate, and most honourable Title, which a State of Mortality can aspire to: mortified to the Vanities of the World and the Flesh, but purified and exalted in our Spirits, and full of vigorous Virtue, eager Zeal, and ardent Devotion.

These are some of the Reasons, why God thinks fit to afflict his dearest Children, why he pronounces *a Blessing upon them that Mourn*; and such as manifestly shew us, how infinitely the World is mistaken, in looking upon temporal Sufferings, as the greatest Miseries, and certain Marks of the Divine Displeasure. O! how unthankfully do those Men deal with God, who repine at their Happiness, and undergo with Indignation and Murmuring these very dispensations of his gracious Providence, which ought rather to be received; With contentedness shall I say? nay, not only so, but even with Joy and Thanksgiving? But of this we shall, I hope, be more effectually convinced, when I have spoken to the Third Branch of this Argument, to which this last Reason assign'd for God's afflicting Holy Men, very naturally leads me.

### SECT III.

*What Grounds of Comfort Good Men may have in their Troubles.*

NOW here I find my self prevented, and that the former Section is in effect an Anticipation of this through every part of it. For,  
if

if God send Afflictions upon Good Men, with such kind Intentions, as by their present Sufferings to increase their future Glory, to keep them clear of being infected by the bewitching Corruptions of the World, to open the Eyes of their Understanding, to cure their past Diseases; and to be an Antidote against contracting New; to prevent heavier Miseries in the other World; to try and illustrate their Virtue; to bring them closer to himself in Love and Holy Trust; to render his Mercy more conspicuous, and their Joy more transporting, by a more eminent Deliverance; to minister Occasions for the Exercise of all Christian Graces, and to conform them to the Image of his own Son, and their dearest Saviour; Who can be discontented at this, except such, as are either so blind, or so perverse, to be Enemies to their own Happiness? How many nauseous Medicines, how many painful Applications, do we willingly submit to, for the preservation of these vile Bodies, and the lengthening out a Life, scarce worth our keeping, were it not in order to a better? And, shall we repine at unpalatable Remedies, for the healing of our Souls, and the securing of a Blissful and Eternal Life? But especially, shall we think much to travel to Heaven, in the same Path which our Lord hath beaten out for us? to bear in our Bodies those Marks of the Blessed Jesus, which shew that we retain to him? The greatest Subjects esteem it an Honour to carry about those Badges which distinguish them, as Officers in the Court and Family of their Prince: Our Priviledge is greater, for we wear the very Robe and Crown of our Spiritual King; and are advanced to his Throne by the same Methods, by which him-  
self

self ascended to it. And how ought we to accept, how should we prize this Dignity?

But still, there are some other Considerations behind, which may more than reconcile, may indeed make us in Love with these Dispensations to us. As *First*, If we reflect, that none of these things happen to us by Blind Chance or any fatal Necessity, but by the special Providence, and particular Disposition of Almighty God. 'Twas thus our Lord confirmed himself in his own Resolutions, to suffer; with some degree of Indignation rebuking the too forward Zeal of a Disciple, attempting his Rescue, *The Cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?* Now the same Hand, that tempered that Cup for Christ, tempers ours too. He mixes it with the same Affection, and the same kind Intentions; The promoting our Good, and his own Glory. He Administers the bitter Potion with such care, that, whatever Danger it may seem to threaten, not one Hair of our Head shall perish by it. Nay, he never fails to qualify us for the kindly Operation, and makes it a Testimony of his Faithfulness, *not to suffer us to be tempted above that we are able, but with the Temptation also makes a way to escape, that we may be able to bear it.* This undoubtedly is matter of mighty Consolation, and what it will become us always to have a very thankful remembrance of.

Joh. 18.2.

1 Cor. 10.  
13.

2. Again, We shall do well to consider, that Christ being now invested with the Power of governing the World, these Events are all ordered by one, whose Experience hath taught him, what it is to suffer. One, who hath born himself, and so is intimately acquainted with the natural Infirmities of Flesh and Blood, and

con-

considers what our Constitution can bear. For in that he hath suffered himself being tempted, he cannot but be touched with a feeling of our Weakness, and will not fail to Succour, and to proportion his Tryals to the Capacity of *them that are tempted*. As the Apostle excellently argues in the second, fourth and fifth Chapters to the *Hebrews*.

3. But no Reflection is more supporting than This, that these very Sufferings are designed for Proofs of his Affection. The Cross which Men have naturally so strong an aversion to, is a choice Treasure, reserved for his particular Friends. Distributed, not equally and promiscuously, but in such a Measure, as is correspondent to the Kindness he hath for each of those Persons, to whom it is imparted. Thus, when St. Paul is called a *Chosen Vessel*, the Evidence of this being such is expres'd in the next Words, For, *I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my names sake*. And St. Peter declares his Notion of this Matter, when he says, *If you be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye, for the Spirit of Glory, and of God, resteth upon you*. Thus He, and St. John, after their being scourged, went away from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy, to suffer shame for his Name. And St. Paul, after an assurance, that the Grace of God should be made perfect in his weakness, begins his song of Triumph, *Therefore I take pleasure in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then am I strong*. And accordingly here presents it to the *Philippians*, as a particular Favour and Privilege, *Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for his sake: Having the same conflict, which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me*. From

Act. 9.16.

1 Pet. 4.

14.

Act. 5.41.

2 Cor. 12.

9, 10.

Phil. 1.29,

30.



4. From hence then, We are warranted to draw this *Fourth* Inference for our Comfort, That, when Tribulation is sent upon us, and attended with Grace to bear it patiently, This is a Token of God's appointing us to Bliss, and Glory everlasting with himself. As on the contrary, to go on in uninterrupted Prosperity, is a very suspicious sign of God's having given over his kind Intentions toward us. Thus much is not only insinuated by the Texts already alledged, but industriously argued in the *Twelfth* to the *Hebrews*. To the same purpose our Lord himself, *Blessed are ye that weep now, for ye shall laugh. But wo unto you that are rich, for ye have received your consolation. Wo unto you that are full, for ye shall hunger. Wo unto you that laugh now, for ye shall mourn and weep.* And that answer of *Abraham* to the rich Man in Hell, *Son remember, that thou in thy life time receivedst thy good things, and likewise, Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.*

Luke 6.

Luke 16.  
25.

Not that any of these Passages are so to be understood, as if Wealth or Prosperity were in their own Nature the cause of any Man's Damnation; but because they are great Snares, and exceeding apt to betray Men into dangerous and destructive Courses. And since every Man hath multitudes of Sins, which deserve to be punished, and some good Dispositions, which God thinks fit to reward; It is better, if his holy Will be so, that our Punishment should be in this World, and our Reward in the next; than that our Reward should be here, and our Punishment hereafter. And since some Measure of each will fall to every Man's share, the not being Afflicted is a fatal Symptom of evil things awaiting such Persons in the Life to come.

Thus

Thus, as St. Gregory expresses it, the Oxen marked out for slaughter are turned loose into pleasant Pastures, and range and feed at Pleasure; but Those designed for use are kept up, and daily brought under the Yoke.

• A Fifth Consolation is the extraordinary Favour and Presence of Almighty God with his distressed Servants, as himself says, *I am with* Psal. 91. *him in Trouble.* Instances whereof we have in Joseph while a Prisoner, and yet more remarkably in the Three Children; with whom Nebuchadnezzar saw a fourth Person walking in the midst of the Furnace, whose Form was like the Son of God. And could Men's Eyes be opened, like those of Elisha's Servant, they would see such bright Guards of Heavenly Powers set round about them, as could not but fill their Hearts with Courage and Comfort. But what the Eye cannot see, the Soul feels. Though we cannot discern those Protectors, which pitch their Tents round about us, and undertake our Defence, by the Orders of that Lord of Hosts, who assigns them all their Stations; yet we can find the Effect, and have the assurance of God's Grace, in the midst of our Tribulation. Hence it was, that St. Paul declared himself strong, when he was weak, because he found the Powers of Divine Grace rise in proportion to his Pressures. And this agrees exactly well with that Account given of himself in the same Epistle: *We are troubled on every side, but not dismayed; we are perplexed, but not in despair. Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed.* And What an advantage, What a support is this, to consider, that in the utmost Perils, nay even in Death it self, they have an Almighty Friend to stand by them, and carry them

2 Cor. 4.

Per- 8, &c.

them through; for (as St. *Augustine* most truly observes) *God never forsakes any Man, who does not first forsake Him.*

Ser. 88  
Tedeump.

To all this we may add the Expectation of a glorious Recompence, and the shortness of our present Sufferings. Both which St. *Paul* hath put together, when he said, *Our light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of Glory.*

2 Cor. 4.  
17.

Rev. 22.  
12.

And our Lord in like manner. *Behold I come quickly, and my Reward is with me.* He will hasten to our Relief, and to put an end to our Troubles; And, when he does come, he will not come empty-handed; If then the Load be heavy, yet let us consider, we have not far to carry it; And we are sure to be nobly paid for our Pains; and that therefore we should strain hard, rather than lose such large Wages for so little Labour. And what can we desire more? Our Lord comforts us under Affliction, he enables us to hold it out, he takes care of the main Chance for us, and after refreshing us with his gracious Presence, he is preparing to wipe away all our Tears, and to place us in the perfect Tranquility of his Blessed Kingdom. Methinks we might even now be persuaded, but if we do not yet, our own Experience will one day make it evident beyond all Contradictions, that upon These, and several Other, accounts, *The Sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with that Glory, which shall be revealed in us.*

Rom. 8.  
18.

SECT. IV.

*How Men ought to behave themselves under Affliction.*

They, who duly attend to the Three Considerations, which went before, cannot be much at a loss for Information in this Fourth. Nothing being more obvious than, that every Man is obliged so to demean himself under Affliction, as may best express the Submission of our Will to That of God, and answer all those excellent purposes, which He designs our Suffering should produce in us. But however, as I have done in the foregoing particulars, so will I in This, observe three or four Things, which pious and prudent Men advise, and such as all who are reduced to distressed Circumstances, will find it highly expedient to remember upon this Occasion.

1. Now it must be acknowledged in the *First* place, that We should all aspire after that Perfection of a resigned and heavenly Mind, intended by our Blessed Saviour, when he bids his Disciples, *Rejoyce and be exceeding glad*, for those very Reproaches, and Persecutions, and other bodily Sufferings, which the common Christian finds it so hard a matter to digest. But, if Nature, and the regard for this World be still so strong; if Flesh and Blood be so heavy that we cannot soar thus high; at least our Understandings should not be debauched, if our Wills be captivated. We should inwardly and truly assent to the Reasonableness of the Apostle's Precept of *counting it just matter of joy*, when we fall into divers temptations, and so re-  
B b prove

Luke 6.  
22.

Jam. 1. 2.

prove and condemn, and lament, the Carnality of our own Hearts, which cannot reach to that Excellence in Practice, which in Speculation and Judgment, we cannot but allow and commend. But if we are not able to reason our selves into this Opinion neither, the least we can possibly suppose our Duty, and that, wherein they that fail are left utterly without excuse, is to *possess our Souls in Patience*; to take what God lays upon us without any impious Repinings at Providence, or unbecoming Reflections upon the Justice, or Goodness of him, whose Wisdom disposes all Events; to lye down under his Rod, meekly and decently, without which it is impossible these Chastisements should ever turn to good Account. For (says the Apostle) *ye have need of Patience, that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.*

Heb. 10.  
36.

2. Secondly, We must do in our Distresses, as the Disciples did in theirs, when the Storm grew furious, apply to Christ for help. He is with Us too, but as then, so often since, *he is asleep*, and therefore we must continue calling, till we have awakened him: So did the Holy Psalmist heretofore, *Up Lord, why sleepest thou? awake, and be not absent from us for ever: Wherefore hidest thou thy face, and forgettest our misery and trouble?* This importunity, provided it proceed, from a true Affection, and just Dependence upon his Care and Help, is exceedingly well-pleasing to him. A most admirable Pattern, whereof we have in that most pathetic Address of Isaiah, *Look down, O Lord, from heaven, and behold from the habitation of thy Holiness, and of thy Glory: Where is thy zeal, and thy strength, the sounding of thy Bowels, and of thy mercies toward us? Are they restrained? Doubtless*

Psal. 44,  
23, 24.

Isa. 63, 15,  
16.

lest thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not: Thou, O Lord art our Father, our Redeemer, thy Name is from everlasting. Thus then we must flee to God for Succour; pour out our Hearts before him; shew him of all our Trouble; expostulate the Case with him in affectionate, earnest, devout and continual Prayer; Remembring always the Success, which our Saviour declares shall attend our Perseverance. And that, if Men, who are frequently vanquished by importunity, even when Friendship fails to move them, will give themselves some Trouble, rather than send such a Suitor away empty; God, Luke 11. who can with ease, and whose Kindness always disposes him to, relieve us, will not fail to grant us those Mercies, which are for our Advantage, provided we persist in asking, and do not cast away our Confidence in his Goodness and Power.

But here we must take one thing to be sure along with us, which is, that Christ suffered the Ship to be almost covered with Waves, before he would awake; Intimating thereby that the measure, and the length, of our Tryals must be left to his discretion. We must not be provoked to Impatience; nor pronounce rashly upon his Dealings with us; nor distrust his Ability, or his Inclination to help. It is not for Us to enquire, why God does This, or suffers That; or how long he will permit the Burden to lye upon us. Known unto him are all his Ways; and Wise and Gracious is every dispensation of his Providence; and He often sends Tribulation in large Measures, and gives *plenteousness of tears to drink*, that his Power may be the more conspicuous in our Relief, and our

- Joy and Recompence great, in proportion to our Tryals; and that he may prove our Integrity and search us to the very Bottom. Mat-  
 1 Kings 19. ters were gone very far with *Elijah*, when he fled into a Mountain, and was destitute of all Humane help, and desired not to live any longer: And with *David*, when he gave all for lost, and complained that he was utterly cast out of  
 Psal. 31. God's sight; and with *St. Paul* when he had the  
 2 Cor. 1. sentence of Death in himself; but never so far with any, as with his own dear Son, when, in the anguish of his Soul, he uttered that doleful Lamentation upon the Cross, *My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?* And Who can in Justice think himself hardly dealt with, when he considers, that God saw fit to reduce the Innocent Jesus, the Son of his Love, to such sad Extremities?

3. From hence then we may infer a *Third Duty*, which is, Magnanimity and Constancy under our Afflictions; grounded upon a strong impregnable Faith in God's Assistance under, and final Deliverance out of them, in his own due time, how severe and terrible soever the Storm may be upon us in the mean while. The Disciples did not cry out *We perish*, till the Ship was in all appearance ready to be swallowed up; and yet Christ upbraids them for want of Faith. *St. Peter* did not express any fear, till he was just sinking, and even then the answer is, *O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?* God can never be at a loss, but hath many wonderful Methods in reserve, unknown to us, for our Comfort and Deliverances.

4. In confidence of these *St. Paul* pronounces himself able to do all things, through Christ that strengthened him; and *David* makes those noble  
 Phil. 4. Declara-

Declarations, I will not be afraid for thousands of the People, that have set themselves against me round about ; and though I walk in the midst of the shadow of Death, yet will I not be afraid ; God is on my side, I will not fear what flesh can do unto me. These are the Professions of a Man, who had drunk deep of Afflictions, and spoke from his own Experience : And the Affection of Mind, expres'd in them, is what Christ hath expressly enjoined. I say, unto you, my Friends, be not afraid of them which kill the Body, and after that have no more that they can do. Nay, St. Peter goeth higher yet, and forbids us so much as to be troubled, or driven to any manner of Confusion, when we are called to suffer for God and a good Cause. The Rewards promised to the Saints are confined to Them that conquer, and are Faithful ; and the Fearful and Unbelieving are appointed their Portion in the Lake which burneth with Fire and Brimstone : Psal 3, 23, 56.  
Luke 12.  
1 Per. 3.  
Rev. 2.  
& 21. 8.

5. From hence there must, and naturally will, proceed another Virtue, absolutely necessary in the Day of Tryal ; A firm Resolution, I mean, to maintain our Ground, and go through any sort of Opposition or Contradiction whatsoever, which we shall have occasion to encounter : Whether it be from the flattering Allurements, which would inveigle us into Sin, or the Threatnings and Cruelties which would affright, and drive us away from our Duty. To this purpose are those Exhortations in Scripture, Trust in the Lord and be doing good, commit thy way unto the Lord, and hold thee fast by him, and he shall bring it to pass. Stand fast in the faith, quit ye like Men, be strong ; Lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees ; and make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way. Psal. 7  
1 Cor. 16.  
13.  
Heb. 2.  
Of 12, 13.



- Of this Resolution we have several notable Instances in the Old and New Testament. Such is that answer of the three Children to Menaces of an angry Tyrant, who would have compelled them to Idolatry. O *Nebuchadnezzar*, we are not careful to answer thee in this Matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve, is able to deliver us from the burning fiery Furnace, and he will deliver us out of thy hand, O King. But if not, be it known unto thee, O King, that we will not serve thy Gods, nor worship thy golden Image which thou hast set up. Such that of *Daniel*, who, notwithstanding an irreversible Decree had passed, that whosoever should ask any Petition of God, or Man for thirty Days, save only of the King of *Persia*; and, that this Decree was by a particular Malice levelled at Him, yet would not discontinue his usual daily Devotions to the God of *Israel*. Such that of *St. Peter* and *St. John*, and the other Apostles, who notwithstanding the Injunctions and Threatnings of the *Jewish Sanhedrim*, and the Scourgings and Imprisonment, already inflicted upon them, replied in their own Vindication, *We ought to obey God rather than Men*. Such that of *St. Paul* to the Brethren, who would have dissuaded him from going into *Judea*, for the better security of his Person; *What mean ye to weep, and to break my heart? for I am ready, not to be bound only, but also to dye at Jerusalem, for the name of the Lord Jesus*. And in the Close of his Eighth to the *Romans*, he expresses the firmness of his Mind, in Terms as high as Words can possibly carry it; that neither tribulation nor distress, nor hunger, nor nakedness, nor peril, nor sword, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor life, nor death, nor height, nor depth, nor any Creature should be able
- Dan. 3. 16, 17, 18.
- Dan. 6.
- Act. 5. 29.
- Act. 21. 13.
- Rom. 8. 35, &c.

able to draw him off from the Love of God. Such in a Word, is that Gallantry of Soul, of which the Apostle produces so many Glorious Instances in the Eleventh to the *Hebrews*, which leads me to answer an Enquiry, not improper or unlikely to be made upon this Occasion; and that is, by what means a Man may hope to attain to this Steadiness and immoveable Resolution of Mind, in the performance of his Duty, though at the Expence of any Difficulties that may attack him in it.

Now this cannot better be done, than by frequently representing to our Thoughts, *First* the inestimable Rewards, prepared for a Recompence of our Fidelity; than the endless and unconceivable Miseries, which all, who draw back, and fall away in time of Tryal, render themselves obnoxious to; and *lastly*, to convince our selves, that the Thing, how difficult soever it may appear, is yet really not impacticable, to observe the Examples of others, who have done and endured the same Things before us, if not much greater, than God puts upon us. And of these Patterns, none is so likely to enflame our Zeal, and provoke our Imitation, as that of Christ himself; whose Sufferings were not like ours, a Chastisement for any Sin of his own, or imposed by a Power irresistible and superior to his own; but purely voluntary, and chosen out of mere Love and Tenderneſs for our Good. How profuse are the Men of this World, in their Boasts, of Wounds received, and Fatigues sustained, in the service of their Prince; though he never exposed himself at all for their Safety? But, if that Prince lead them on in Person, if he do not only hazard himself, but actually suffer in the Action, What Soldier,

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who

who hath the least Spark of Honour, does not stand by him, and follow him into the very hottest of the Service? Now this is our Case, the Captain of our Salvation hath been Wounded, and Buised, and infinitely more Afflicted, for us, than we can be for him; And shall we be such despicable Wretches, to shrink and fall off from him, when he calls us into the Field?

But if this be thought a Model, too perfect to frame our selves upon, let us at least animate our selves by a Reflection upon the noble Exploits, which our Brethren, in all Points like us, of the same Passions and Frailties have done; and when they, through so much Tribulation, have entred into the Kingdom of God, let it not seem hard, if a little of it be laid in our Way thither too. St. Paul gives this description of his own and the other Apostles condition, when they first planted the Gospel; that they *were Fools, and weak, and despised for Christ's sake; that they endured Hunger, and Thirst, and Nakedness, and Buffeting; that they had no settled Habitation, and maintained themselves by their own Labour; that while they Blessed, they were reviled; when they were Persecuted, they took it; when they were Defamed, they returned Calumny with Entreaties; that they were made as the Filth of the World, and the Off-scouring of all Things.* That the Course they took to approve themselves the

1 Cor. 4.

2 Cor. 6.

*Ministers of God, was, by much Patience, by Afflictions, by Necessities, by Distresses, by Stripes, by Imprisonments, by Tumults raised upon them, by Labours, by Watchings, by Fastings, by Pureness, by Knowledge, by Long-Suffering, by Love unfeigned, &c.* The account given of himself in particular, in the Eleventh of that Epistle, The

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admirable Exhortation to this purpose, so affectionately urged in the Twelfth to the *Hebrews*; The Consideration, how dear these Sufferers were to Christ, how Virtuous and Holy in themselves, how useful to the World, how easy it had been for God to have prevented all their Sufferings, or to have changed their Circumstances, and turn'd the Hearts of the most virrulent Persecutors in a Moment, if these Afflictions had not been more expedient, and contributed to his Honour, and their Benefit, much more than Ease, and Plenty, and Prosperity, and Favour with Men: In a word, The whole New Testament, especially, is one continued Doctrine of the Cross, explaining the Ends of it, the Profit to be obtained by it, the mighty Supports provided for those that are oppressed with it, the Behaviour proper under it. So that no part of that Blessed Book can be diligently perused, without furnishing us with some one or more of the particular Instructions, whereof it hath been my Endeavour to give my Reader a due Apprehension, in this Chapter.

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#### C H A P. IV.

*A Fourth and most dangerous Obstruction to Holy Resolution. The Love of the World.*

**T**HE former Obstructions, to the removal of which, the Chapters last perused, have, I hope, by the assistance of God's Grace disposed my Reader, though they be very great, yet may they in this respect seem less

less formidable, because they stand single and alone. But that, which we are now preparing to encounter, is of a general Influence, and indeed the common Root and Source of all the rest. For, whether Men grow desperate in their Sins, or decline the Service of God, upon pretence of difficulty, or fear of persecution, or aversion to Suffer, what Good Men are frequently called to; still the Love of the World is at the bottom of all, and the several Excuses produced in their own Vindication, are but so many Effects of this pernicious Cause. If the Jews refuse to confess Christ, it is because *they love the Praise of Men more than the Praise of God*: If Demas forsake St. Paul, when imprisoned for the Confession, and Propagation of the Truth, *the Love of this present World*, is the cause of his Desertion. This is an universal Evil, diffused every where, and lurking in many Hearts, where it least appears; Nay, covering it self oftentimes by such artificial Disguises, as seem most directly opposite to, and yet issue directly from it.

Of this we need no other Confirmation than that Divine Parable of the *Sower*; In which are represented Three sorts of Men, upon whom the Word of God hath no effectual influence, and as many Reasons assigned, why it miscarries in each of them respectively. The *First* are compared to the *Way-side*; upon which whatever Seed is scattered, the Fowls of the Air presently pick it up, or the Feet of the Passengers tread it down. And this Christ expounds, of the careless and unthinking Hearers, who never attend to the Business of Religion seriously, and suffer the Devil, or any wicked or trifling Suggestion, to juggle all they had heard, out of their Minds.

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The *Second* are resembled to *Stony Ground*, where the Seed flourishes a while, but for want of Good Root, and depth of Soil, it dries up, and withers away in streſs of Heat or Drought: And these are a kind of fickle People, that intend, and begin, well; set out with a very warm and eager Zeal, but upon any Discouragement, any trying Affliction, they fall from their own stedfastness, and grow as cold in their pursuits as if they had never entertained any Thoughts of God and Religion at all.

The *Third* are said to be a Field, where the Corn comes up indeed, but is so over-powered with Thorns, that is, the Cares, and Riches, and Pleasures, and deceitful Vanities of this World, that the Good Corn is perfectly choaked, and brings no Fruit to Perfection. From whence we may, very justly infer, that this is the most deplorable State, and most dangerous Obstruction of all the rest. Because, here the Corn is supposed to have taken Root, and to come up; and yet, notwithstanding all these Promises of a plentiful Crop, the Increase is hindered. So that, whereſoever the Christian Faith, which answers to the Good Seed, is planted, and received, and peaceably professed, and yet does not bring forth the Fruit agreeable to that Seed; A Holy Conversation, and the Service of Almighty God, (which alas! is the Case of most Countries which call themselves Christian at this Day) there the main hindrance, which keeps back such a blessed Increase, is the Love of, and Concern for this present World.

The Importance of this Parable is abundantly intimated to us, by that very solemn bespeaking Men's attention to it, *He that hath Ears to Hear, let him Hear*: By that significant Preface  
to

to the Exposition of it, *To you it is given to understand the Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven; but to others it is not given; that seeing they may see, and not perceive, &c.* Thus imputing the Disciples Skill in the mystical and most concerning Truths of the Gospel, to be in some good Measure due to their being let into the true meaning of this Parable. And therefore Christ magnifies their Advantage above that of common Men, *But blessed are your Eyes, for they see, and your Ears, for they hear.* After all which pompous Apparatus, follows, *Hear ye therefore,* (for this is a Priviledge by which you are distinguished) *the Parable of the Sower.* Since then all that is necessary, or proper, to be said upon the Subject now before us, is comprehended in this Parable, I shall keep close to that only; and enforce what I would recommend, for the taking away the Hindrances of a Holy Life, growing from the Love of the World, by these following Particulars.

*First,* In regard our Lord, with the Cares and Pleasures of the World mentions the *deceitfulness* of Riches, I shall endeavour to shew the Vanity of all Temporal Enjoyments and Advantages, how little they are worth in themselves, how unworthy to divert us from the Pursuit of heavenly Treasures; and then, how wretchedly they delude us, and fall short of what they pretend to, and what we are drawn in to esteem them for.

*Secondly,* In regard, our Lord calls these Cares and Thorns, I shall examine, how they come to deserve this Title, notwithstanding the seeming Satisfaction which attend them.

*Thirdly,* I shall enquire into that quality, by which they are said to *choak* the Word, and make the Man unfruitful. And, *Last-*

Lastly, I shall give Directions for using the World so, as not only to prevent these Mischiefs, but to make it and its Advantages turn to our mighty Comfort, and more glorious Reward hereafter.

SECT. I.

*Of the Vanity and Deceitfulness of the World.*

NEVER was any Point proved by a more competent Evidence, than this. It is not left to rest upon Philosophical Arguments, drawn from the nature of the Thing, or such Colours of Probability, as humane Art and Wisdom may put upon it; but upon the Testimony of One, who had greater Opportunities of knowing the utmost these Advantages here below can pretend to, than ever any Man had. The Books of *Kings* and *Chronicles* give us an account almost incredible, of the Prosperity, and Grandeur of *Solomon*; that of *Ecclesiastes* informs us from himself, what Liberty, what Pains he took, to indulge all these Enjoyments; and yet, when the Whole comes to be computed, the most consummate Wisdom, from its own Practice and dearbought Experience, sums up the whole in this short, but often repeated, Sentence, *All is Vanity and Vexation of Spirit.* St. *John* in the New Testament, hath taken particular Care, to dissuade Christians from entangling themselves in the Love and Affairs of the present World, from a Consideration, how very fleeting and uncertain all its Joys are. And, descending to particulars, he reduces the Substance of them all to Three Heads, which he terms *the Lust of the Flesh, the Lust of the Eyes, and the Pride of Life.* Comprehending under <sup>1 Joh. 2</sup> 16. the



the *First*, All bodily and sensual Pleasures; Under the *Second*, All the Pomp and Gaiety of Riches. And under the *Third*, All that Honour, or Greatness, or Fame, which Ambition pretends to seek, and Pride values it self upon. These three therefore, with the Dependences upon them, I shall consider in the present Argument. And *First* of all, That, which seems to be of largest extent, meant by those Words of the Apostle, *The Pride of Life*, and capable of being branched out into the following Particulars.

*First Vainglory*, by which I understand an inordinate desire of being thought and spoken well of, esteemed, applauded, and praised by Men. I call it an *Inordinate* Desire, because, when confined within due Measure, and regulated by proper Objects and Means, there is a desire of this kind, so far from being blameable, that it is not only lawful, but highly necessary, useful, and commendable. But when this is proposed, as a Man's chief End, though there is scarce any more common, yet is it certain, there cannot be a greater, and more exquisite, Folly. For, what in truth is this, but chasing a Feather, flying up and down in the Air, and tossed to and fro by the Blast of every Man's Breath; wearying ones self in a Thing hard to be gotten, and of little or no value, when we have got it? For what real value can there be in a Thing so mutable, as that must needs be, which depends upon the Inconstancy and Capriciousness of Men's Humours; that pulls down one, and sets up another, without any Merit or Reason; that makes a Man great and little, or nothing at all, good or bad, in a Moment, and at Pleasure.

Of

Of this the World never had, or could have so pregnant an Instance, as our Blessed Saviour, who was so far from giving just Offence, that he deserved the Love and Admiration of all Mankind; and yet, never were People more divided, never were the same Persons more suddenly, more unaccountably changed, than in their Opinions of, and Deportment to, him. Some said he was a Samaritan, *and had a Devil,* John 9. *why should they hear him?* Others that he was a John 7. Great Prophet, *and spoke as never Man spoke.* Some were convinced that he was a Teacher come John 3. from God, *because no Man could do the Miracles that he did, except God were with him;* Others John 9. again were no less peremptory, that he could not possibly be of God, *because he wrought Miracles* Mat. 21. *on the Sabbath-Day.* The Multitudes, on the Tenth Day of the Month, conducted him to the Holy City, with all the Ceremonies of Respect, and Shouts of Triumph; And, on the Fourteenth of the same Month, those very Multitudes were instant with loud Voices, to have him crucified; and preferred a Robber, and a Murderer before their late adored Son of David, *and their King coming in the name of the Lord.* Chap. 27.

If then this Innocent, this Holy Person, this Preacher and Pattern of Righteousness, this worker of Miracles, was no better dealt with; What Security, what Confidence can any of us, infinitely inferiour to him in Desert, and blemished with Failings and Faults innumerable, have of better Treatment? Why should we put the Strefs of all our Labours, upon so wretched, so doubtful an Issue? Why should we lay our selves at the Mercy of every spiteful Detractor, or false Flatterer? Have we no surer a Game to play than this? Yes certainly, St. Paul esteemed 1 Cor. 4. 3.

*it a small Thing to be judged of Man's Judgment.* And so ought we; Provided, the Master of the Race, and the Giver of the Prize, approve us, it is of no great Consequence, whether the Standers-by be pleased or not. To accommodate our selves to their liking, is to grind with every Wind. And, how wretched a Thing is He, that drudges, and toils, and slaves himself upon every puff of Breath, but is immediately damped, and lost, as soon as this Blast of Praise slackens upon him?

Prov. 27. 21. *that As the Fining-Pot for Silver, and the Furnace for Gold, so is a Man to his Praise.*

This tries him thoroughly, and soon discovers whether his Virtue be true Standard, or of a base Alloy. For, as Metal, if it be Good, is not hurt, but purified by the Fire, but if Bad, turns into Dross and Fume; so is a Good, or a Bad Man, affected with Commendations. How many do we see puffed up, and even transported, beyond all sober Sense, by a general Applause; and as dejected and despicably melancholy again, by Contempt, and a common Cry going against them? How many are supported in their Sins, and tempted to value themselves for their Wickedness, by Countenance and Credit, and Great Examples? How many gross and nauseous Flatteries do we hear, and see, kindly received; and yet they who cannot but be sensible, they are such, have not the Wisdom or the Grace to pray with *David*, that *these precious Balms*, these Words as smooth as Oyl, *may not break their Head.* Is not this Vanity? Is it not the most refined Madness? Those Glorious Beings above us, the Blessed Angels, seek not their own, but God's Honour only. And we, poor groveling

Psal. 141.

groveling Worms of the Earth, affect to be Magnified, and neglect our Makers Glory. The Elders in the *Revelation* take off their Crowns, and cast them at the Feet of the Lamb; Rcv. 4. and we Labour to take the Crown from his Head, and put it on our own. So truly does the Psalmist pronounce, *verily every Man living* Psal. 39. *is altogether Vanity*; And we never confirm this Sentence against us more effectually, than by our most sollicitous Pursuits after Reputation and Applause. Especially, when these, as too generally they do, obstruct us in our Duty. For what more extravagant, more absurd, than to neglect the Service of God, for any Thing the World will say or think of us? What will it signify to us in the next Life, how People censure or commend us here? Allow this but one serious impartial Thought; and then I will venture to appeal to thy own Conscience, whether the World and the Love of it, in this respect, be not the very Abstract of Vanity it self.

2. A *Second Branch* of Ambition, is the Desire of Worldly Honour and Greatness. Dignity and Promotion is in the sight of many, a Jewel of high Price, a Purchase worth all the Toil and Danger, that can possibly be paid for it. But of how fatal influence this is to Religion, we have many sad Examples upon Record, to inform us. This was the very disposition, that John 11. hindered the chief among the Jews from confessing, and coming in to Christ: This check'd the good Intentions *Pilate* had, of rescuing Jesus John 19. from the Malice of the Jews; and made the conviction of his Innocence too weak a Match for the Danger of being thought no Friend to *Cæsar*. This kept back *Agrippa* and *Festus* from becoming Christians, though the first of them confest

A8s 26.

St. Paul's Doctrine had almost persuaded him to be one. But alas! These Men, and the many Millions, who tread in their steps, do not give themselves the Trouble, of weighing this darling Idol of their wicked Hearts, in an equal Ballance. For in good Truth it is but a painted Treasure; acquired with great Trouble and Hazard; preserved with infinite Anxiety, and Difficulty; and lost with an insupportable Grief and Remorse. To wean our selves from this Trifle, we need only recollect, how many have sought in vain, what we desire; how many have had it, and found no Comfort in it; how many have climbed to the highest pitch of it; and been tumbled down again, in an Instant; and how short these Men's Satisfactions fell of their Cares, and Fears, and Sorrows. What is now become of all those Princes, those might Men, in all Posts and Professions, who once took such Joy in their own Advancement? Do Men so much as talk, or think of them? Are not all their Laurels long since withered, and even their Names and Memories buried in their Graves? The Men, that durst not once have looked them in the Face, now trample them boldly under-Foot, and sit in Judgment over all their Actions. So short an Enjoyment is Honour, to them who are most successful in their Endeavours after it.

But the very Method, which is usually most prosperous in aspiring after it, is another Evidence of its Vanity. He thought very pertinently, who compared it to a Man's own Shadow, which, the faster he runs after it, flees the faster from him, and when he runs away from it, follows him; in short, which is not to be caught but by falling down to the Ground; and, even then too,

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the Man that thinks he hath it, finds his Hands empty as before. Thus we see the Eager and Ambitious frequently disappointed, the Modest and Humble courted and advanced : And thus it is in succeeding Ages, as well with regard to Memory, as to present Possession. The Greatness of a Man's Soul leaves more lasting Impressions behind it, than that of his Fortune or Promotion : And, Who are now so high in general Esteem, as those good humble Men, which, with St. Paul counted *all things but dung, so they might win Christ ?* For, What indeed is that to be accounted of, which neither contents the desires of the Mind, nor asswages the Pains of the Body, nor continues in the Possessioner's Custody, nor leaves any advantage behind it, when it forsakes him ; and consequently, which is, upon all Accounts altogether unworthy to stand in competition with a thing so exceeding Beneficial, so different from it in all respects, as that holy Resolution, which I am now endeavouring to dispose my Readers to ?

3. A *Third Vanity*, under this Head of Ambition, or *Pride of Life*, is that of Descent, or noble Birth. Which is indeed of some Consideration, when attended with Virtue, and the fear of God ; but without this to recommend it, it is an errand Trifle, and not fit to be esteemed, either by God or Man. Our true Pedigree is no where better drawn, than by holy *Job* For, be our Family what it will, there is not any of us but may joyn in that Confession. *I have said* Job 17. *to corruption, Thou art my Father, and to the worm, Thou art my Mother, and my Sister :* And, if any of us think it below our selves to own this Kindred, the Tombs of our Ancestors will testify against us. The beginning of all true Nobility

bility was Virtue; and therefore that which was our Predecessour's Ornament and Reward, ought to be a Spur to those who succeed them. Their Names and Titles, without their Deserts, do but reproach their degenerate Posterity, and in no degree prevent their being utter Aliens to all that is valuable in the Family. What a fondness is it then, to go a begging to the Dead for Honour, to rake up Urns, and Ashes, and old Records, for somewhat there, to cover our own Shame with? The King's Coin does not change the Metal; and he that is Refuse or Counterfeit in himself, cannot be made *Sterling* by the formality of a Stamp. The Methods taken by God have proceeded upon Measures very different from This. The Prince and Saviour of the World was seldom distinguished by any other Title, than the *Son of Man*; and though he were Lord of all, yet he styles himself commonly a *Shepherd*, a *Servant*, and the like. His Ancestor *David*, who was advanced to a Temporal Throne, was taken from the Sheepfolds, and the youngest of the Family: And the Spiritual Governours of his Church, were chosen out of Shops, and Custom-Booths, and Fisherboats: The Mean appointed to confound the Mighty, and the Simple to subdue the Wise, (as one of them says) so insignificant a preeminence is this of Blood; so empty, where Virtue is not with it; but so perfectly against all Sense, that it should be a pretence to detain Men from Virtue, or tempt Quality and Condition, to look upon Religion and the Service of God, as a thing below its Care, and very best regard.

1 Cor. I.

4. Another Vanity contributing to the *Pride of Life*, is Worldly Wisdom, such as the Scripture tells us, is *Foolishness with God*. And, if it be no better

better, considered in it self, what is it when moving in Opposition to God, and the only true, that is Religious, Wisdom? It is a most amazing thing to consider that we should be made after God's own Image in the Faculty of Reasoning, and yet, that the Judgments of the generality of Mankind, should be so vastly different from his. Who would not imagine, that the shrewd and subtle, the nice and the eloquent should have been the properest Persons both to propagate, and to do most eminent Service in the Church of Christ? And yet it seems this Doctrine is of another Temper, and requires other sorts of Instruments. For, as *not any noble, so not many wise, neither after the flesh* 1 Cor. 3. 18. *are called.* Nay, *if any man seemeth to be wise in this World, let him become a fool, that he may be wise towards God,* says St. Paul. These two kinds of Wisdom go upon distant Principles, and pursue quite different Ends. And therefore the Wisdom of this World is vain, and of no account, except it be subject to the Wisdom of God. And they, who for any Temporal Respects, though seemingly of never so great importance, shall condemn those that despise the World, and abandon all for God's Service, Their Wisdom is the grossest and most fatal Folly: And a Day will come, when they shall confess, and be sadly sensible, that it is so. But still this is to be understood, not of all Wisdom in general; but of that, which contradicts, or hinders, the true Wisdom from above.

5. A Fifth Vanity reducible to this Head is Beauty, of which the Wise Man says, *Favour is deceitful, and Beauty is vain.* This a painted Serpent, charming and fair without, but full of deadly Poison within. A very destructive Snare



this, and many have been seduced and undone, by it. God hath imparted some degrees of Loveliness to his Creatures, thereby to draw us to the love and admiration of the Creatour, by these Rays or Shadows of his own essential Goodness. But, where our Hearts stop short, we gaze like Children on the gilded Cover, without improving by the Contents of the Book. For the true use to be made of this, would be to think how lovely and adorable He must needs be, who could impart such excellent, such attracting Charms, to Earth and Ashes: And to consider, how exquisite our Happiness will be hereafter, when we shall be admitted to enjoy his glorious Presence, of whose amiable Graces the noblest Creatures have but a very small part communicated to them. Would we but exercise our selves in these Reflections, our Hearts might be presented pure and unspotted before God, full of chaste Delights, and pleased with an innocent Contemplation of his Works. But, by resting in the outward appearance of things, we come to be captivated with a fair Face, let loose the Reins to unclean Thoughts, and kindle the polluted Fires of Lust in our Breasts.

Hence do so many perish daily, with a deceitful Form, whose Emptiness it were most easy to discover. For, let the most inviting Face but be touched with a little Blemish, and all its Power is immediately lost and gone. Two or three fits of an Ague destroy the best Complexion; and if the Soul depart from this Idol of a Body, in one half hour its Favour vanishes; and within two Days time, the most passionate Lover can scarcely bear it above Ground. But, if none of these things happen,

yet

yet Old Age is stealing on, and this by insensible degrees will make such an Alteration, that scarce any accident could disfigure it more, than Nature it self will shortly do. And can any thing be more vain than that Beauty which of its own accord grows into Deformity? Can any thing be more absurd, than to be proud of this in our selves, or to endanger our Souls for it in Others? How wretchedly do they mispend their time, who imploy Hours and Days, Care, and Pains, and Art, to procure or preserve this fleeting Shadow, as if their Happiness consisted in it? Nay to make it, as too many do, a hindrance to their Duty here, and an Instrument of eternal Damnation hereafter?

6. The Last Vanity I shall mention under this Head of *Pride*, is Gaiety of Apparel. This is the grossest of all the rest, and yet as common as any of them. For, let us but observe the thing it self, and its Scandalous Original. Had *Adam* never lost his Innocence, we had never stood in need, and most probably never known the use, of Clothes at all. For these were first contrived for a Cover to our Shame, and a relief against our Infirmities; and Shame and bodily Infirmities are both of them the unhappy effects of Sin. So that to value our selves upon This is, as if a Beggar should boast of those Rags, to which his own Negligence and Profuseness had reduced him. *St. Paul's* advice is, *If we have food and raiment, let us therewith be content.* *St. John Baptist* is particularly taken notice of, for the Austerity and Coarseness of his Habit; and so is *Elijah*, in whose Spirit and Power he came. The first Garments we read of, were made of Skins of Beasts, such probably, as had been slain in Sacrifice. Our Bless-

1 Tim. 6.

Marth. 3.

2 Kings 1.

Gen. 3.

Marth. 11.

Luke 16.

fed Lord mentions it, as one of the Delicacies of King's Courts, to wear soft Clothing, and one of the Characters given of the Rich Glutton is, his Purple and fine Linnen. Not that all Distinctions of this kind are to be condemned? Such as Decency, and Custom require, may be very innocent, when used with Humility and Modesty. But, to be curious and expensive, and to take a Pride in these things, is both sinful and extremely vain. And This is generally the Case. Men spoil and rob all the Creatures, that come within their reach; They take their Wool, their Furrs, their very Excrements, they dive into the Sands of the Sea, and dig deep into the Bowels of the Earth; And, when they have put on These, which they call Ornaments, plundered and borrowed from the vilest of Creatures, they then look big, and fancy all this Comeliness their own. They conceive high Thoughts of themselves, and look for Respect from others upon this Account; As if That, which covers, or perfumes their Bodies, were some substantial Excellence, inherent in their Minds. Nay they carry the Matter so far, as often to make the preserving, the putting on, or the want of these things, a pretence for neglecting God's Service; a vast expence of Time; a diversion from better Employment; a corruption of the most valuable Virtues; and in short, the bane of a holy Resolution, and a truly Christian Conversation. And thus much of the first of St. John's general Heads, *The Pride of Life.*

2. The Second is termed, *The Lust of the Eyes*, by which, as was said before, I understand the Pomp and Pleasure of Riches. Concerning This St. Paul commands Timothy, and in

in Him every Minister of the Gospel, to charge <sup>1</sup> Tim. 6. *Them that are rich in this world, that they be not* <sup>17</sup>. *highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God.* And the reason why no Confidence ought to be reposed in them is, because as Solomon observes, *they cannot profit in the day of* Prov. 11. *wrath, when God afflicts us in this World, or 4.* when he takes us out of it: And least of all, when we most want relief, in the day of Death and Judgment. To which purpose it is, that the Wicked are introduced, lamenting their own Folly, when too late, in these Words among others, *What hath Pride profited us? or* Wisd. 5. *what good have Riches with our vaunting brought* 8, 9. *us? All these things are passed away like a shadow, &c.* And what need of any farther proof, that These are Vanity, than This; that when the Owner most wants help and comfort, they cannot furnish him with either? The Life of such a Man is passed over like a Sleep; in which He dreams, as it were, of Golden Mountains, pleasing Imaginations of his Wealth, and the Service this would do him in any exigencies, have entertained him for a while; but when Sickness, or Trouble, or the approach of Death and Judgment awaken him, he finds all this but a Dream in effect, and himself destitute of all Support in his extremity, and the bitterness of his Soul. Nay, St. James represents the Matter yet a great deal worse, and tells us, that very often they do not only not allay, but add to the Miseries of the Possessours. *Go to now, Jam. 5. 1,* *ye rich Men, says he, weep and howl for your Miseries that shall come upon you. Your Riches are corrupted, and your Garments moth-eaten. Your Gold and Silver is cankered, and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were*

were fire ; ye have heaped up treasure together for the last days. All This, and much more, might be alledged out of Scripture ; by which the Holy Ghost signifies the Danger and Vanity of Plenty and Pomp, and the folly of those Men, who dote upon it so, as either to get Wealth dishonestly, or to hoard it up niggardly, or to squander it away idly and unprofitably. *How*

Mark. 10. *hard is it, says our Saviour, for them that trust in*  
24. 25. *Riches to enter into the Kingdom of God ? It is easier for a Camel to go through the Eye of a Needle, than for a rich Man to enter into the Kingdom of God.*

Luke 6. *And again, Wo unto you that are Rich, for ye have received your consolation. To which we may add that of St. Paul, They that will ( that make it*

1 Tim. 6. *their aim and business to ) be rich, fall into Temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful Lusts, which drown Men in destruction and perdition.*

Is it possible for Words to express more forcible Arguments for the drawing Men off from the Love of Riches ? Must not every Covetous Man, who reads these Texts, stand self-condemned, and reproached by his own Conscience ? Let People pretend what they please, of Families, and Dependences, and a Care necessary to be taken, for providing these a comfortable subsistence. All This, and whatever else they can alledge, will never vindicate the inordinate Love of, and anxious Concern for, the World. Our Saviour does not only not admit, but he exposes the Vanity of this Pretence. He asks the Rich Man, who had filled his Barns, whose those Fruits and Goods should be, which he had with so much sollicitude provided, and promised himself a long Enjoyment of ? The reply of Wife and Children is cut out in the very

Luke 12.

ry first Word, *Thou Fool*; for Folly it was, and great Folly, to give himself up to the World, even upon that Consideration. For, What comfort, think we, can it be, to a Father in the Torments of Hell, to reflect that his Family live plentifully for a little while upon Earth, by means of that Wealth, which is become an Instrument of making Him miserable for ever? Will he not then wish, that his Soul had been more and his Family less, his care? And what is Family then? Alas! A new Scene opens, the Face of things, and the Dispositions of Men's Minds, are quite changed: Our Relations shall not be to us, in the other World, what they are now; Partiality, and Carnal Affections, have no place there; but the only Object of Love and Hatred remaining will be Good and Evil. One Alms bestowed for God's and Christ's sake, upon an Enemy, or a Stranger, will yield us more solid Comfort, than an overgrown Estate left to our Children, or a Family raised by our most painful Industry. Were This duly considered, Men would use the World, as not abusing it: They would do good to themselves, by doing good to others; even The Hungry and Naked Members of Christ that want, and are ready to perish. They would, if not before, yet at least in their last Hours, send some *Friends* before them, *made of the Mammon of unrighteousness, that when they fail these may be a means of receiving them into everlasting Habitations.* For, then only is the Rich Man happy, when he hath the Grace to make a right use of his Riches; who, while the time of his Stewardship continues, manages them so prudently, as to make them turn to true Account, by being laid out, to the Honour of God,  
the

the Benefit of Others, and the increase of his own everlasting Reward. And so much for the second Head.

3. The *Third Head* of *Worldly Vanities*, styled by *St. John*, *The Lust of the Flesh*, comprehends under it all those sensual Delights, whereby the Body is chiefly gratified. Such as
- Rom. 13. Feasting, Merriment, Rioting, and Drunkenness, Chambring and Wantonness, and such other Entertainments and Diversions, as *St. Paul* denotes, by *making provision for the Flesh to fulfil the Lusts thereof*. And, though many of these bein their own Nature lawful, when confined, to proper Seasons and Measures, and limited by such Rules, as health, and convenience, and decency prescribe; Yet are they, not only vain but extremely Dangerous, in those Excesses, which the Men of this World usually covet and indulge them in. To these do the Miseries denounced by our Lord belong, *Wo unto you that are full, for ye shall hunger. Wo unto you that laugh now, for ye shall mourn and weep*. And of the same sort of Persons compared with his own Disciples, it is said in another place, *Ye shall weep and lament, but the World shall rejoyce*. Thus making it as it were, a note of Distinction between Good and Bad Men, that the One should pass their Days with a large Mixture of Sorrow, and the Other let themselves loose to jollity and present Delights.
- Luke 6. 25.
- John 16. 20.

And reason great there is for this Distinction. A Christian's Life is a serious and thoughtful Thing; he considers the mighty Importance of the Work upon his Hands; he hath many afflicting Remembrances of his Sins and Failings; he keeps a constant and awful Sense of the Justice of God upon his Spirits; he feels the Mife-

ry and desolate Condition of the Soul in this Vale of Misery, and Scene of Temptations; he pants and groans for a release, and longs most earnestly for that perfect Redemption, where not only Pains and Tears, but Sin and Imperfection, and Danger shall be done away. And these Impressions, being vigorous and lively upon a good Man's Mind, in proportion to his Love and Zeal for God and Religion, preserve it from flying out into Extravagance, and render him always sober and grave, and composed. And, though This Man know it both lawful and necessary, and therefore makes no scruple, to recreate himself with innocent and moderate Diversions; yet does he constantly bear in mind, what Watchfulness and Carefulness becomes a Man, who is travelling through rough and slippery Ways, to his Heavenly Country; And, that all who labour after Eternal Salvation, are directed *to work it Phil. 2. 12. out with fear and trembling.* Hence are those Sayings of the Wise Man, *It is better to go to the Eccles. 7. House of Mourning, than to go to the House of Feasting. Sorrow is better than Laughter, for by Prov. 28. the sadness of the Countenance the Heart is made 14. better, and in another Place, Happy is the Man that feareth always.*

And ought we not to fear, and look before us, to think what account we shall be able to give, of our Talents, our Time, our Wealth, our other Advantages and Opportunities of doing Good? Ought we not to consider, and contrive, how we may best withstand our Spiritual Enemies, mortify our Lusts, observe God's Commandments, and, by our prudent Conduct, make our Light to shine before Men? Sure, if these Matters were but attended to, but especially



ally if any of us would but reflect, what State our Soul is in, and how we could stand before the Great God, in Judgment, should a sudden Death hurry us thither immediately, This would cut off a World of idle and impertinent Diversions; and we should hear no more of those Complaints, so unbecoming the Mouths of Christians, that Time lies upon their Hands, and that Consideration is a Burden. This would keep Men from letting themselves quite loose to Vanity, and sensual Mirth, which above all Things, unhinges and breaks the Tone of the Mind, scatters our Thoughts, and indisposes us for any thing that is Serious and Good, that becomes a Man to do, and requires Application in order to be done. It is very observable, in our Pattern the Blessed Jesus, that, though he disdained not to carry our Sorrows, and to shed our Tears, yet we never find him condescending to partake of our Laughter, nor our Jollities. The Two extremes of our Life are in God's Hand, and he hath so ordered the Matter, that Pain and Sorrow attend our Entrance into, and our Passage out of, the World: But the middle Part, which is left in our own Hands, we dispose of to Folly and dangerous Delights; and in stead of imploying the little space we have to the best purposes, we labour how to keep it void of Business, and to drive away even that most necessary Thought, whence we came, and whither we are going.

O! Were we but the Wise Travellers, which we ought to be, our Pleasure would not be ranting and revelling upon the Road, but that of going the right Way, and thinking on the place whither we are bound. Nor should we, in our Inn, be Sollicitous to feed high,

high, and indulge our Appetites, but choose what is most proper to sustain us in our Journey; and remember that any Dainties we call for will be sure to inflame the Reckoning. And therefore the best way is so to Eat and Drink over-Night, as we shall be content to pay, in the Morning, when we go away. For a Reckoning we must come to, and how jocund soever we may be now; Yet, when Death and Judgment call upon us, assuredly our sensual Mirth will be Heaviness, and our Joy Mourning. Let us therefore consider, that we indulge the Pleasures of Sin, at our own vast Expence; that all Neglects of God and our Duty, all our wanton and intemperate, our profane and dissolute Conversation, will be charged upon us; and let us fear, lest that Sentence against *Babylon* be ours; *How much she hath glorified her self, and lived deliciously, so much Torment and Sorrow give her.* Rev. 18. 7.

I hope, by this time, Every one of my Readers is convinced of the Vanity of the World, and of all the Satisfaction it can pretend to, so far as concerns the worthlessness of these Things in themselves: I shall now proceed to speak briefly of that, which I proposed, the as Second Part of this Argument, their deceiving us, and falling short of what we expect in, and esteem them for. We are all dealt with in this Case, as *Jacob* was by *Laban*, who, after he had served him Seven Years for *Rachel*, was at last put off with *Leah*. For, how many false Promises does the World make daily, and how little do we receive of that, which it encouraged us to depend upon? One Man flatters himself with the Thoughts of sound Health, and long Life, and behold he is cut off in the midst,  
of

Psal 62.

of his Days. Another with Promotion and a plentiful Fortune, and he sinks into Contempt and Extremity of Want. Run over your Acquaintance, look into all Places, and all Conditions, and you shall find City and Country, Princes and private Persons, full of Lamentations and Complaints. Some, for the loss of what they had; Others, for the missing what they were in prospect of; a Third sort, for not finding their expected Satisfaction in what they have attained; All, for being in some sort deluded and defeated. Infinite indeed, are the Cheats of this Dissembling World. It is goodly, and beautiful, and gay to the Eye; but when we come to prove and handle it, it hath no Substance or Solidity at all; It is, as the Prophet says, *Deceitful upon the Weights, and altogether lighter than Vanity it self.* O miserable World, says St. Augustine, whose Grievs are real, but *thy Delights Counterfeit and Empty; Thy Sorrows and Sufferings are sure, thy Pleasures uncertain: Thy Pains are permanent, thy Comforts short and transitory; Thy Toils insupportable, thy Rewards poor and despicable: Thou promisest with all the Profuseness of a Prince, but payest with all the Indigence of a Beggar. Thy Miseries are pure and unmixt, without any Abatement, thy Happiness tempered and allayed with all kinds of Misery.*

To get a true knowledge of the World, and see things in their true Light, it is necessary to retire at some distance, and take our view, from thence. For, while we are in the midst of it, and engaged in it's Affairs and Enjoyments, we walk in a Mist, and are blind to our own Condition. Thus it first puts out our Eyes, and then leads us wrong. It corrupts our Distinctions between Good and Evil, and then lulls us asleep

with

with a profound, but false, Security. It binds us with Cords of Silk, and makes us content to be deceived and enslaved. It falls in with the Inclinations of Sense, and ruins us to our Hearts desire. It shews us the *Kingdoms of the Earth, and the Glory of them*, and finds our greedy Ambition disposed to *fall down and worship*. It shews us damaged Goods, and will not allow us to carry them to the Light. It hath *Ahab's* Four Hundred false Prophets, which keep us from hearing the Counsel of one honest *Micaiah*; and stifles Reason and Conscience, when they would tell us the Truth. It lays before us pleasant Baits, but if we nibble at them, strikes us with Death upon the Hook. It offers us, like *Babylon*, Golden Cups, but the Drink is mingled with deadly Poyson. In a Word, It is an alluring *Jael*, proffering us Shelter, but Murdering us if we accept it; a flattering *Joab*, embracing us with one Arm, and stabbing us to the Heart with the other; a Treacherous *Judas*, that betrays us with a Kiss. It torments them, that love it, deceives them, that trust it, treats them worst, that take most Pains to serve it, and damns them to all Eternity, who give their Hearts up to it. *How long then ye Sons of Men, how long will ye turn your Glory into Shame, how long will ye love Vanity, and seek after a Lie?* For such in truth is the World; Falshood and Fraud, and treacherous Malice, lie at the bottom of all its fair Pretences.

## SECT. II.

*The World compared to Thorns, and why.*

**I** Proceed now in the *Second* place, to enquire into the fitness of that Comparison made of the World, wherein our Saviour Christ resembles it to *Thorns*. An Enquiry, the more necessary, because so many seem to take marvelous Satisfaction in it's Riches and Pleasures. And therefore it needs all the Authority of our Lord himself, to make this received for a just account of the World. And yet, if we will take a close and impartial view of the Matter, the restless pricking Cares, which gall the Soul, and the many Temptations to Sin, which wound it even to death, do abundantly justify this Title. Hence it is, that *Salomon* does not only call all temporal Enjoyments *Vainity*, but *Vexation of Spirit* too; intimating, that where these have once entred and taken possession, there is no more place for true quiet and peace of Mind; but warring Desires, tumultuous Thoughts, afflicting Fears, Anguish, and Anxiety, and incurable Discontent. How many rich Men, feel this to be true? How many Ambitious groan under their cruel Bondage, and yet have not the Heart to break this Yolk of Tyranny? And certainly, of all the Punishments, inflicted by God upon sordid and worldly-minded Wretches, his Justice and Wisdom is most eminently seen in this, that he makes what they esteem their greatest Felicity, to prove their continual Torment. He hems them in on every side with Cares, that rush upon them in the Morning, and assault their waking

waking Thoughts; that haunt and dog them close at the Heels all Day, and embitter their promised Enjoyments, that pursue them to their Beds, and break their Sleep at Night. In a word, that fulfill that Sentence of *Isaiah*, exprest in most significant Metaphors, when he says, *They hatch Cockatrice Eggs, and weave the Spiders Web: He that eateth of the Eggs dieth, and that which is crushed breaketh out into a Viper. Their Webs shall not become Garments, neither shall they cover themselves with their Works. Their Works are Works of iniquity, and the Act of Violence is in their Hands.* Isa. 59.

Thus we see the Dangers, the Disappointments, the painful Travel, the pernicious Fruit, of these Men; which expose them to infinite and unprofitable Toil, and end at last in their own Guilt and Destruction. So that, to this case in particular may very fitly be applyed that description, given by *Moses* of Wicked Men in general; *Their Vine is as the Vine of Sodom, and of the Fields of Gomorrah; their Grapes are Grapes of Gall, their clusters are bitter; Their Wine is the Poyson of Dragons, and the cruel Venom of Asps.* Deut. 32, 33. So dreadful and loathsom are the Figures made use of to represent the Wicked Worldling's Condition to us; so bitter and dangerous what he falsely calls Pleasure; if once it get the dominion over his Heart, and be not managed with the nicest Caution, and most steady Sobriety.

But, though the sense of the Holy Ghost, delivered by these inspired Authours, be so amply declared in the Point before us, yet need we not rest upon even the weightiest and most sacred Authorities for Proof, but may satisfy our selves beyond all Contradiction, from our

own Reason, and the Nature of the Thing. And, among others, these following Particulars are a substantial Evidence, that thus it always is, and cannot be otherwise, with the Men who are of that Disposition, intimated by the Seed sown among Thorns, in the Parable now under Consideration.

1. *First*, The shortness and uncertainty of all their Prosperity, and the many Accidents, which these Advantages are liable to be taken from him by, after one hath gotten them, as he thinks, in quiet possession. For, however defective the good Things of this World may be in other Respects; yet, no doubt it would add much to their Value, and be some excuse for setting our Hearts upon them, could they be constant and perpetual. But this is a Privilege, they are not capable of, and infinite are the Hazards, that have them at their Mercy. It is much more than probable, they may be wrested out of your Hands by other means. But there is one thing infallibly certain to separate, in a very little while, between them and their Possessors; And the prospect of this unavoidable parting is a most cutting Consideration; As the Son of *Sirach* hath very movingly expressed it; *O Death, how bitter is the Remembrance of thee to a Man that liveth at rest in his Possessions, unto the Man that hath nothing to vex him, and hath prosperity in all things!* Were this Death at as great a distance from us, as the longest Period of human Nature would admit, yet even so the Term is but a short one. But alas! This is very far from being the Case, and daily we observe it otherwise. How many have we seen advanced high and hastily, and as quickly tumbled down into their Graves, before they have

have reaped any Fruit of their Labours? How many, revelling in Joy, and all things to their Hearts content, whose Happiness one Week hath put an end to? How frequent Examples of this Nature may we have heard and read, how many indeed may we see daily? What an Heart-breaking was it to *Alexander* the Great, after all his Toils and Conquests, when his Soul was full of Joy and Pride, and expected to sit down quiet universal Monarch of the World, when he knew no other occasion of Grief, than only that there were not more Worlds to enlarge his Glory and his Spoils, just in this juncture to be struck with Death, when all things thus conspired to render Life more than ever desirable? What a Confusion must it needs have been to all those, who, like the Rich Man in the Gospel, after great Care taken to bestow their Treasures, and promising themselves a most comfortable Enjoyment of much Provision laid up for many Years, hear that dreadful Sentence of Death pronounced upon them; *Thou Fool, this Night shall thy Soul be required of thee, and whose then shall all these Things be*, which thou hast heaped together with so much anxiety, and hogged thy self in, with such a mistaken Delight? This, This is the miserable Condition of many eager and greedy Worldlings, whose only Business and Aim it is, to build stately Seats, to purchase great Estates, to gather vast Summs of ready Money, to buy Titles and Places of Honour, to make powerful Alliances, and strengthen their Interest, as if these Things were never to have an End. And when at last they think of setting up their Rest, then, like Beasts of Burden, they are turned off, and all the Treasure taken off from them, under the



load of which they have laboured and groaned; and all the Effect of their Drudgery is, that their Bodies are wasted, and their Souls wretchedly galled, with the carriage of that, which they are denied at last any Enjoyment of.

2. Another Thing, which justifies the comparing, even the Prosperity and Pleasures of this Life, to *Thorns*, is that grievous Counter-balance of Sorrow and Dissatisfaction, which every earthly Advantage carries along with it. For never yet was there any Comfort or Delight, without it's Allay; Never any Man, who had the longest experience of it, that could say he was perfectly satisfied with his present Circumstances. We have already seen what variety of Fears and Cares the possession of Riches is ever incumbered with: And how miserable a Slavery, Honour, and Advancement renders the Candidates and the Attainers of it subject to. The gratifications of our fleshly Appetite, even when innocent and lawful, are as *St. Paul* says, attend with *Tribulation*; but if these be irregular and unallowable, then is it followed with sad Remorse, and Ten Thousand bitter Consequences.

1 Cor. 7.

3. It were endless, to attempt an exact account of all those Calamities, to which we are all exposed, in this State of Mortality. The Infirmities and Diseases, the Misfortunes and Dangers, to which our Bodies are daily and hourly obnoxious: The infinite contending Passions of our Minds, which perpetually afflict and distract us with Grief, with Envy, with Anger and Hatred, with inordinate Desires, or sensual Love. The many adverse Accidents, that happen to our Estates, the numberless Mischiefs and Disquiets, that are brought upon us from our Neighbours, by means of unjust and un-

unreasonable Men. The Fewds and Factions, the Quarrels and Contentions that tease, and vex, and torment us, while one engages us in troublesome and expensive Suits, to defend our Title, another brings us in danger of our Life; a Third destroys our Good Name, by false and scandalous Reports. Spight and Envy, Flattery and Fraud, Violence and Revenge, Perjury and Subordination, Forgery and Falseness, are ever and anon laying Snares for our Ruin. The Days, the Hours we live, are scarce so many, as the Miseries and Vexations, the Contradictions and Contentions we meet with in them. And, which is very remarkable, the Evil we endure hath this Advantage, above the Good we enjoy, that any one Opposition or Defect quite over-powers and destroys the Sense of many Comforts. So that, if all the other satisfactions, of which our present State is capable, could be supposed to center in one Man, and yet any one part of his Body, any one Circumstance in his Affairs be in disorder, this single defect would take off from all his other Enjoyments. We see by one eminent Instance in Scripture, how very deep and painful an Impression a very Trifle will make upon a Man of a Worldly Disposition; for *Haman* in all his Grandeur and Pomp declares, that *neither the Glory of his Riches, nor the multitude of his Children, nor all the Things wherein the King had promoted him, nor his Advancement above the Princes and other Servants of Ahasuerus, nor his being the only Person admitted to Esther's Banquet, availed him any Thing at all, so long as he saw Mordecai, the Jew sitting at the King's Gate.* Esth 5. 11, 12, 13.

4. Besides all these Miseries, we shall do very well to consider one more great and formidable

to a Good and a Wise Man, than all the rest; and that is the Temptations, and Snares, by which these Things seduce and entangle Men in Sin and Perdition; so that no Man is secure one Moment, but in a State of Danger, like his, that walks in a Dark Night, upon a slippery Precipice, where every step he takes may be his Ruin. This condition of Mankind is said to be represented to a Holy Man of old, by a Vision of the World hung round about with Nets, and the Devils sitting at every corner, watching their Prey, and driving People into them. And the Prophet *David* begins his description of God's Judgments upon Wicked Men, by saying, that he shall *rain upon them Snares*; that is, shall suffer these to fall as thick about them, as Showers do from the Clouds. And thus indeed it is; For there is no Action, or Accident, so trivial, which, to a Mind not rightly disposed, does not prove an Instrument of Death. Every alluring Object he sees, every loose Discourse he hears, every pleasing Thought he cherishes; Youth and Age, Friends and Enemies, Honour and Disgrace, Riches and Poverty, Success and Disappointments, Company and Solitude. The common Refreshments and conveniences of Life, Food and Rayment, all, draw the Man into Mischief, who is not watchful to manage them rightly, and to prevent the ill Effects they are capable of producing, but gives his Mind up to Sensuality, and so takes part with the Enemy against himself.

And yet, notwithstanding Sin is the only Thing, that can make People truly Miserable, how easily are they drawn into it, how greedily do they commit it, how prevailing, how universal is the Infection? *Job* observes, that *Wicked Men drink Iniquity like Water*, not only with-

*Psal. 11.6.*

*Job 15.*

without any Reluctance or Scruple, but with the same Eagerness and Pleasure, as a Man quenches his Thirst. And if this surprise us, a very little of our own Observation and Experience may serve to make that wonder cease. For if we walk the Streets, and take a view, of the Dealings in Trade; of the Proceedings in Courts of Judicature; of the Consults in Assemblies of State; what Frauds, what Falshood, what Partiality, what Piques, what Emulation seems to reign every where? How loudly does every Nation and Countrey, and Age in the World, and how have they ever complained, of Justice bought and sold, of Truth wrested and perverted, of Shame and Honour lost; of Innocent Persons condemned, and Guilty acquitted, of the Wicked advanced, and the Virtuous oppressed? How many Robbers and Defrauders flourish? How many Extortioners and publick Cheats bear sway? How many Murderers are respected, and admired, how many vile and despicable Wretches are put in Authority? Nay, which is worse, how many Beasts, and Men of no Principles, no Qualities of true Men, but that Figure which the Brute within disgraces, have been in all Ages advanced to govern their Betters? Search all History and you shall find no Period of Time free from these Miseries in one part of the World or other. And keep company with your own Contemporaries be it in what Part or Age of the World soever, and tell me truly, whether Vanity and Pride, Censoriousness and Detraction, Spight and Envy, Dissimulation and Fraud, Debauchery and Profaneness, Swearing and Blasphemy, Lying and Perjury, or some of these, do not make up the most considerable Part of the  
Con-

Conversation. In short, the greater part of Mankind govern themselves directly, as Beasts do. Sensuality is their Principle; Appetite, and Passion, and Power are their Law, and Justice and Reason, Religion, and Virtue, are Rules and Measures, much talked of indeed, but infinitely oftner to be met with in Pretence, than in Practice. And, if all this disorder do, as it most certainly does, proceed from an inordinate Affection for the World, let my Reader judge, whether upon this account of Temptation and Sin alone, but much more upon this added to the other Reasons assigned before, our Saviour did not express himself very significantly and justly, when he compared the World with its Cares and Pleasures, to Thorns

### SECT III.

*How these Thorns choke the Word, and make it unfruitful.*

OF these Thorns the Sower from Heaven affirms, that they choke this good Seed of this divine Word, and render the Soil overrun with them, (the Men of worldly Disposition) *unfruitful*. And he expresses himself upon this occasion by a Word, that properly denotes stopping the Breath, or Suffocation for want of Air. Now thus it is here. The Persons, whom this sort of Spirit possesses, are strangled, as it were, with gross Vapours, and distempered Humours, and the refreshing Air of heavenly Life can find no Passage to their Hearts. For it is not possible for both these Spirits to abide together, and we are told, the

Rom. 8. 9. *sad Condition of them who want the latter. If*

any Man, says the Apostle, have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And, since the distinguishing the Tree by its Fruits is a plain and an universal Rule, we cannot be at a loss to discern the Contrariety of these two Spirits, by the Contrariety of their respective Products. St. Paul hath left us such marks, as cannot possibly deceive us in making this Judgment. *The Fruit of the Spirit*, he tells us, is Love, the common root and band of all Virtues, Joy, Satisfaction in serving God; Peace, Quiet of Conscience, and an evenness of Mind under any Dispensations of Providence; Long-suffering, opposed to impatience; Gentleness, Sweetness of Behaviour, and tenderness in reproof or punishing; Goodness, kind Dispositions, and actual Performance, where it lies in its Power to be beneficial; Faith, Fidelity and Constancy; Meekness, in not being hastily provoked, not resenting Injuries deeply, not arrogating to its self more than its due; Temperance, a pure and chaste Conversation, and a reserved use of even lawful Enjoyments. *Against these there is no Law.* They are so evidently conducive to the perfecting Humane Nature, and the benefit of Society, that no Law of God or Man ever prohibited any of these, but always laboured to oblige Men to, and by all possible means to enforce, the Practice of them. But let us cast our Eyes a little back, and the same Chapter will present us with another Catalogue of a very different Character and Complexion, which proceed from the Spirit of the World: *The works of the Flesh are manifest*, which are these; Adultery, Fornication, Uncleanness, Lasciviousness, Idolatry, Witchcraft, Hatred, Variance, Emulations, Wrath, Strife, Seditions, Heresies, Envyings, Murders, Drunken-

Gal. 5 22, 23.

Vers. 19, 20, 21.

*Drunkenness, Revellings, and such like : of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they who do such things shall not inherit the Kingdom of God.*

From hence now it can be no hard matter, for any Man to determine concerning his own State, what manner of Spirit he is of, and, whether he belong to the Kingdom of God or no. *They that are Christ's*, the Apostle adds, *have crucified the Flesh with its affections and lusts* ; that is, They have so mortified their bodily Appetites, as not to be drawn into Sin, by any vicious Inclinations from within, or Temptations from without. And again, *They that live in the Spirit, must walk in the Spirit*, their Behaviour must be such as may testify, what Principle they act upon, and are influenced by : So then, if our Works be Carnal and Worldly, our Spirit it follows is so too ; and we are dead in Spirit, have no part in Christ, nor any place in his Kingdom. And, since the World does not only abound with such Works, but disposes them that love and serve it, to the Practice and Habits of them ; since it permits no Fruits of Christ's Spirit to grow, or leaves so much as a possibility for the good Seed to come to any Maturity, where these Tares have taken Root ; hence it is, that the Scriptures always represent Christ and the World in a State of Opposition, and the Dispositions agreeable to each of them as incompatible with one another. Thus himself tells his Disciples, *The World cannot receive the Spirit of Truth* ; and that neither He, nor his Servants, and true Followers, are of the World, though they live in the World. And in his Prayer a little before his Passion, *O Righteous Father, the World hath not known thee, but I have*

Verf. 24.

Joh. 14.  
17.

Joh. 17.  
Ibid. 25.

have known thee ; and these ( his Disciples ) have known that thou hast sent me. Hence St. John says, that, if any Man love the World, the love of the Father is not in him. And St. James, that whosoever will be a Friend of the World, is the Enemy of God. St. Paul speaks of profane and negligent Chistians being condemned with the World. And Christ seems to insinuate no less in that dreadful Exception to his Father ; *I pray for them, I pray not for the World, but for them which thou hast given me, for they are thine.* Joh. 2. 15. Jam. 4. 4. 1 Cor. 11. Joh. 17. 9.

You see what difference he puts between those that are his and Gods, and those others whom he comprehends under the Name of the World. And Oh ! that Men would well consider this ; that they would think, how dismal the case of those People is, who are excluded from the Intercessions and Prayers of the Lamb, that takes away the sin of the World. Those Prayers, in which his very Enemies and Tormenters, and Crucifiers were once allowed a part. This certainly would awaken them out of their stupid Security ; This would check their most busy Projections, and take off from the Relish of their sinful Delights, and by abating their Love for the present Vanities, shew them the Necessity of a future and everlasting Provision ; for which, if they take no care, and are not duly qualified, better were it for the greatest, and gayest of them all, ten thousand times better, if he had never been born.

No wonder then, if St. Paul take care to advise his Romans, that they would by no means be conformed to this present World ; but be transformed to Christ's likeness by the renewing of their Mind. No wonder, if St. John, who recorded those Sayings of his Master upon this Subject, just

Rom. 12.  
2.



1 Joh. 2.  
15.

just now recited, and was throughly acquainted with his Mind in this Matter, cries out like a Man giving warning to People, that are running upon the very Mouth of Danger, *Love not the World, neither the things that are in the World.* For if we may not love it, if we are not allowed to conform our selves to it, but at our manifest Peril, and under the severest Penalties; if the being Followers and Imitators of Christ requires Practices and Dispositions, diametrically opposite to the Children of this Generation; if to be like one of these exclude us from the Inheritance of the Children of Light; though this go no farther than merely a Compliance with the Vanities and Customs of the World; What shall become of those abandoned Men, who do not only comply with, but even court it; that instead of being carried along with it, admire it, and rest in it, and lay out all their time and pains, and thought upon nothing else?

1 Joh. 5.  
19.

If we would be satisfied what provokes Christ to hate the World to such a Degree, St. John hath resolved that Point too, where he says, that *the whole World lies in Wickedness.* This is the only thing, which the Spirit of the World leads to, and is set upon. It tends to Pride and Vain-glory, to Ambition and Covetousness, to Malice and Revenge, to sensual Pleasures, and all manner of vile Indulgences. Quite contrary to the Spirit and Temper of Christ, which disposes to Humility and Meekness, to Contentedness and Moderation, to forgiving Injuries, and loving Enemies; to Abstinence and Purity, to Self-denial, and taking up the Cross; to a generous Disdain of all earthly Pleasures, and an eager Pursuit of the Kingdom of Heaven. He hates the World, because it hates him, it per-

persecutes the Good, and advances the Bad ; it does , so far as in it lies, extirpate Virtue, and plant Vice in its stead. It shuts the Doors against him when he knocks, and stifles all the Motions of his good Spirit.

Since then the World is so vain in it self, so deceitful in its Promises; since its Enjoyments are so tempered with Trouble, and so full of Danger, as we have seen; since it is a professed Enemy to Christ, and excluded from his Favour and his Kingdom; what can we make of it, but a Scene of Folly, a Market of false and counterfeit Goods, a Labyrinth of Errour, a barren Wilderness, a tempestuous Sea, a fair Garden without Fruit, a Den of Basilisks and deadly Scorpions, a Fountain of bitter Waters, a Valley of Tears, and at the best a delightful Frenzy? Hear St. *Chrysostom* summing up the Evidence against it. He tells us, it hath nothing in it, but Sorrow and Shame, Repentance and Reproach, Folly and Madness, Toil and Terror, Sicknefs, and Sin, and Death. The Rest it proposes, is full of Anguish; the Security it gives, without any Foundation; the Labours it engages Man in, without any Fruit; the Sorrow it brings, hath no true Comfort; the Mirth it affords, is of no Continuance; the Miseries it involves us in, have neither End nor Remedy. And if these, and many Evils more, beyond the wit of Man to express or imagine, attend the Love and Service of it; if there be no one substantial Advantage to be had from it; Why, will we be so mad to be cheated with this false Disguise? Why do we not shew our selves Men, and pluck off this Vizard, and effectually convince our Minds of its Vanity? Why do we suffer our selves to be hindred in, or  
kept

kept back from the Service of God, so reasonable in it self, so profitable in its recompence, by so mere a Trifle, which can never compensate our Loss sustained by sticking to it? Shall we pretend to Reason and Prudence, and yet manage our Affairs no better? Shall we, with our Eyes open, make so mad a Choice? I say with our Eyes open; for after what hath been said upon this Subject, no Man can pretend that he is not sufficiently warned against the Dangers of this Obstruction to Holy Resolution, and a virtuous Life.

#### SECT. IV.

*How we may use the World safely, and to our Advantage.*

**B**UT still there is one thing more behind, requisite to give a Discourse upon this Subject it's just Usefulness and Perfection. For, since the World, bad as it is, must yet be our Dwelling, and the Troubles and Temptations of it our Discipline and Tryal for a certain Season, it is highly necessary, that, before this Argument be entirely dismiss'd, I should endeavour to put my Reader in a way, how he may avoid the Dangers of this perilous State, and even use this World, which is the Instrument of eternal Ruin to so many, in such a prudent manner, as may turn to his own Gain and greater Happiness.

For the *First* of these particulars, which relates to the avoiding its Dangers, I know not what to advise better, than, that Men would very frequently and seriously bend their Thoughts, upon all that is contained in the foregoing Secti-

ons ;

ons; for the better discerning the Vanity and Deceitfulness of the World, and the discovery of those Snares, by which unwary Souls are caught *Surely*. says *Solomon*, *in vain the Net is spread, in the sight of any Bird*: And, if Men have fair warning, and are made sensible, what their Danger is, and where it lies, their Destruction, if they run in to it afterwards, is from themselves, and will admit of no excuse. From that Account in *Joshua*, that the Spies made their escape from *Jericho*, by the way of the Mountains, *Origen*, according to his Allegorical Method of interpreting Scripture, observes, that the only way to avoid the Dangers of the World, is to keep upon the Hills: That is, to be above the World, and to direct our steps to a higher and better Place. Thus *St. Paul* says of himself, and of all good Christians, *Our Conversation is in Heaven*. And, no doubt, the less we entangle our selves with the Cares of earthly Things, the safer and easier our Minds will be. For, as the Fowler hath no hopes of his Prey, till he can lure her down to pitch; so the Devil, by his Suggestions, says in effect to Us, as he did once to Christ; *Cast thy self down*. And he cannot destroy us, till we stoop to his Baits; and tast, and fall in Love with, and fasten our Hearts down to, the things here below.

Now, since our Affections must of necessity be placed upon some Object, the main Point will be to fix upon One, truly noble and worthy of them; to raise our Minds up to Heaven, by pious and devout Thoughts, and pure Desires. Could we arrive at *David's* Temper, we should be safe. The World would have nothing left to catch hold of us by, could we say, as he did, from the very bottom of our

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Hearts;

Prov. 1.  
17.

Joshua 2.

Phil. 3.  
20.

- Pfal. 73. 23. Hearts; Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is nothing upon earth that I desire in comparison of thee. My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my life, and my portion for ever. The Apostle had secured himself, by that Disposition which he expresses, when he says, The World is crucified to me, and I unto the World. Yea verily, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ. And, in another
- Gal. 2. Phil. 3. Place, Nevertheless though we live in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh. Would we but imitate these glorious Examples, learn to see the World, as it really is; and to despise it, as in truth it deserves; Would we set our affections on things above, and not on things on the earth, thus rising with Christ to his and our promised Kingdom; we should mount above the reach of Danger; and all the Temptations of the Devil would no more be able to hurt us, than a Snare upon the Ground does the Bird that soars in the Air, and flies away from the Danger it sees.
- 2 Cor. 10. But farther yet; It is in our Power, not only to escape, but even to improve upon, and to profit by, these Temptations. And our Lord hath directed us, how this may be done, when
- Luk. 16. 9. he said, Make to your selves friends of the Mammon of Unrighteousness. The Rich Man in Hell, mentioned in that Chapter, had it once in his own disposal, to have never come into that place of Torment at all. And so hath every Man, to whom God gives Wealth, and Opportunities in abundance, of making himself happier by it to all Eternity. For, as I observed formerly, Riches are not the necessary Cause, but the occasion only, of their Owner's Destruction:

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tion: And this fatal Effect they never have, except when they are abused to evil purposes, or not employed to good ones. The Case is directly the same with *Honour*; and *Pleasures*, and every thing that Men are usually fond of here below. And therefore, what I shall say here upon One, I desire may be, and it may very easily be understood of, and applied proportionably to all the rest.

Our Business here then is to take notice and warning by the Dangers of others, and when we see or read of their Destruction, that we be careful to steer a contrary Course, and not wrack our selves upon the same Rock. Let then the Men of plentiful Fortunes consider the Argument made use of by the Apostle to provoke them to good Works. *Be not deceived*; Gal. 6. 7. *Whatsoever a Man soweth, that shall he also reap. He that soweth sparingly, shall reap sparingly, and he that sows bountifully, shall reap bountifully.* 2 Cor. 9. 6. Now, according to this Rule, What a mighty Harvest might Rich Men secure to themselves, who have store of this Seed lying by them, and such an abundance of Ground proper to sow it upon: For our Lord says, *That the poor we have always with us, and whenever we will, we may do them good.* Mark. 14. 7. Let them remember, what it was, that distinguished the *Sheep on the right hand, from the Goats on the left*: Even the free Performance, and the niggardly, and sullen refusal, of good Offices, and works of Charity; That Clothing the Naked, feeding the Hungry, and laying out their Substance, and their Pains, in Kindness and Compassion, as God had enabled them, entitled these to that joyful Sentence, *Come ye Blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you, from the beginning of the World.* And let them

Luk. 16.  
25. &c.

them once more, if the Hopes of Reward will not win them, be awed at least by fear of Punishment; tremble at the Testimony their Blessings will one day bear against them; and reflect, that, because the Rich Man in the Parable had received his good things in his life time, but would not do good with them, therefore he was tormented in that flame; and could not prevail for so mean a Request, as one drop of Water upon the tip of a Fingure, to cool his Tongue.

Vid.  
Dam.  
oper. p.  
842.  
Edit.  
Bazil.

I will conclude this Chapter, with a Parable related by *Damascene* in the Person of *Barlaam* the Hermite, and very apposite to our present purpose. "A certain State, he tells us, there was, where, for many Generations, the Subjects were wont to choose themselves a King, one of foreign Extraction, and very obscure, and altogether unacquainted with the Laws and Usages of the Country. This Prince was very absolute, and might do whatever he pleased for the space of one Year. But, at the Expiration of this Term, while he was enjoying himself in the most profound Securi-  
"rity, and living, as if he thought his Reign  
"would never have an End, they made a sud-  
"den Insurrection, devested him of his Royal  
"Robes, dragged him Naked through the Ci-  
"ty, and banished him, thus destitute and for-  
"lorn, without so much as Clothes to cover  
"him, into a Remote Island, where he led the  
"rest of his Days in Poverty and Misery, as  
"surprising as his former Plenty, and Ad-  
"vancement to the Throne had been. It hap-  
"pened that One Person, wiser than his Pre-  
"decessors, was thus promoted; who imme-  
"diately informed himself of this Custom, be-  
"haved himself with great Prudence and Mo-  
"deration

deration in his Power, and bethought himself of making some Provision against that time of Abdication, which others had never shewed any regard to. This Prince then, well aware how short his Reign was like to be, transmitted out of the Treasury, which was intirely at his disposal, vast sums of Money, and Jewels of great Value into that Island, whither he expected to be sent off. When the Year came about, his Subjects treated him with their customary Insolence. But at his Arrival in the usual place of Exile, whither he went with great Confidence and Security, while others that had gone before him, languish'd in Misery and Want, He found his Mony lodged in safe Hands, was received with universal Respect, and lived in greater Splendour, than ever he had done before, whilst upon the Throne.

The Application of this Parable is very natural and easy. That State is this World, a Country not properly our own. Here Men once poor, who came Naked into the World, are raised to great Plenty and Dignity; but after a short Period, and many times when they least apprehend such a Change, they are sent as Naked out of the World, as at first they came into it. Those, who are so imprudent, as to make no Preparation for this mighty Revolution, find great Affliction and Misery in their new dwelling. But the wise Prince, who foresees, and is upon his Guard against this Calamity, is that Good Man, who during his Prosperity here upon Earth, sends before him the Treasure of Good Works. And these, at the day of his Death, secure him a kind Reception in the other World; and crown him with Glo-



ry and Happiness infinitely greater, than it was possible for the Condition of Mortality to enjoy. But they, who come thither, like the foolish Virgins, without Oyl in their Lamps, meet with no better a Welcome than *I know you not*, nay which is worse with that terrible doom, of *go ye cursed into everlasting fire*. From which amazing Malediction, our good Lord deliver us all, and grant us so to pass through things Temporal, that we finally lose not the things Eternal.

## C H A P. V.

*A fifth Obstruction to Holy Resolution. Presumption upon God's Mercy.*

**E**Rroure, we say is infinite; and, though the way of Truth be one and streight, yet the false and crooked Paths, that lead to Sin and Damnation, are very thick on each side; And, how contrary soever they may seem to each other, yet all terminate in the same fatal Place at last. It is incredible, how many different Stratagems the Devil hath on Foot to ruin us, and with what a fatal Address he accommodates his Temptations to the Temper and Complexion of every Sinner. Some there are, upon whom none of the Impediments already mentioned have any Power to fasten; and yet they are caught in another Snare, at least as destructive as any of the other. The *First* Obstruction, we set our selves to remove, was despair of God's Mercy, which represented the Sinner's Danger to him in so gasty a Form, that he thought Repentance to no manner of purpose, and the Sentence

tence gone out against him to be absolute and irreverfible. But now, we have to deal with a fort of Men in direct Oppofition to Thofe, who mainly prefume upon that Mercy, and think it in their Power to revoke and efcape that Sentence, whenever they pleafe. Lay before them the heinousnefs of their Sins, and the neceffity of Amendment, and they think all Arguments answered with this; that, *God is gracious, and willeth not the death of any finner*; that, *as his Majesty is, fo is his Mercy*, not only Great, but Infinite; and therefore, not to be overcome by any, though never fo foul, though never fo numberlefs Provocations. . Chrift hath dyed for them, and commanded them to trust in his Merits, which are an Overbalance to all their Sins, and fo long as they put their trust in Thefe, it is not poffible for them to perifh. In Confidence of this Refuge they prolong their wicked Courfes, and add this worft of Sins to all the reft, that they make the Goodnefs of God, a Foundation for difpleafing, and acting in defiance of him. They are in the higheft degree injurious to the Divine Majesty, *make fin to abound*, becaufe *Grace hath abounded*; and continue in their Wickednefs, for that very Reason, becaufe his Bleffed Son hath fhed his Blood to purge, and take it away.

But is not God indeed merciful? No doubt he is unfpeakably Merciful; There is no end, no meafure, of his Kindnefs to a wretched Man; Mercy is his effential Perfection, his very Nature, and he can no more ceafe to be Gracious, than he can ceafe to be God. But, though this be one, it is not the only Perfection of this Divine Nature. And we muft always fo conceive of God, as not to fet up one Attribute in contradiction

Pfal. 25. to, and to the Destruction of, another. *Gracious is the Lord, and Righteous*, says the Psalmist; and therefore we deceive our own Souls, if we so possess them with Notions of his Mercy, as quite to forget and disregard his Justice. *All the Ways of the Lord are Mercy and Truth*, but they are so, to such as keep his Covenant and his Testimonies, For such only have a Right to his Promises; and his Truth is not engaged to extend these any further, than Men qualify themselves, by performance of that Condition, upon which these Promises are suspended. Every true Convert lays hold upon these Excellencies in Conjunction; and considers the inviolable Friendship and mutual Harmony which is established between them. If a Sinner lay hold upon Mercy alone, he perishes by Presumption; if upon Justice only, he sinks into Despair. But, when these two conspire together to frame such Ideas of Almighty God, as result from a due Temperament of these Perfections; then is the Soul happy indeed; free from the sad Anxiety of groundless Terrors; free from the treacherous Flatteries of Carnal Security; and in the direct way to Justification and Salvation.

St. *Augustin* hath cut the middle Way between these Two Extremes, excellently well.

Traff. 33. "Let those Men, says he, who are so highly  
in Joan. "delighted with the Mercy and Gentleness of  
"God, call to Mind, and Tremble at his Justice and his Truth. God is exceeding gracious, 'tis confest; nay, he is Long-Suffering, and not easily provoked: But still he is a *Righteous Judge*, Strong though he be *Patient*. He is provoked indeed every Day; but there is a Season of Wrath, before which, *If a Man do not turn, he*

Pfal. 7.

he will whet his Sword. Two Things there are, that above all others threaten Sinners with eternal Ruin: The one is hoping too much, which we call Presumption: The other hoping too little, which is termed Despair. He that says to himself God is a Good God, a Merciful God; and therefore I will follow my own wicked Imaginations, for that very Reason, because he is a Good and a Merciful God; This Man is in danger of being undone by hoping too much. He that is sensible of the hainousness of his Sins, and the Wrath of God, but takes it for granted, that those Sins cannot be pardoned, nor that Wrath pacified; that says in his own Heart, I am sure to be damned, and therefore, Why should I deny or restrain, my Inclinations, in any sinful Gratification they hanker after; this Man is killed by Despair. Let us observe then what Method God takes to save these People, and correct their mistaken Apprehensions of this Matter. To the Presumptuous belongs that warning of the Son of Sirach, *Concerning Propitiation, be not without fear* Eccluf. 5. *to add Sin unto Sin. Say not his Mercy is great, he* 6, 7. *will be pacified for the multitude of my Sins; for Mercy and Wrath come from him, and his Indignation resteth upon Sinners. Make no tarrying to turn to the Lord, and put not off from Day to Day; for suddenly shall the Wrath of God come forth, and in this security thou shalt be destroyed, and perish in the Day of Vengeance.* To the Fearful and Despairing is that affectionate Invitation directed by Ezekiel, *At what time soever the Wicked Man* Ezek. 18. *turneth away from his Wickedness, which he hath* 27, 30. *committed, and doth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his Soul alive. Repent and turn yourselves from all your Transgressions, and so Iniquity shall not be your Ruin.* So

So manifest is the Danger, so great the Folly of those wretched Men who support themselves with a vain Confidence in the Goodness and Compassion of Almighty God, and make this an occasion of hardening and estranging their Hearts from him, and his Ways. And surely it is a most absurd Consequence, and a very perverse Method of reasoning, to argue thus. My God is Merciful and Long-Suffering, and therefore I will abuse his Mercy, and weary out his Patience, The Scripture, it is evident, instructs us to draw a quite contrary Inference from these comfortable Premises. God is compassionate and ready to forgive, he waits long for my Conversion, and does not cut me off in the middle of my Sins; but the longer he forbears, the heavier will his Punishments be at last, if not prevented by a timely Reformation. The greater his Patience, the more unpardonable is my neglect; and therefore I ought by no means to make any delay, but to accept and lay hold of his Grace, while the Day of Grace lasteth. This is the Pattern St. Paul hath set us, who puts the Case with some vehemence and indignation, as if it implied a more than common Degree of Insensibility to be guilty of it. *Despiseſt thou*, says he, *the Riches of his Goodness and Forbearance, and Long-Suffering, not knowing that the Goodness of God leadeth thee to Repentance; But, after thy hardness and impenitent Heart, treasureſt up unto thy self Wrath against the Day of Wrath, and Revelation of the Righteous Judgment of God?* These Words most manifestly import, that the Reason, why God defers his Vengeance, is thereby to give us space, and to dispose our Minds to Repent; And, that no Man's account is like to be so dread-

Rom. 2.  
4, 5.

dreadful, as his, who is not won-over by these dispensations of Kindness: That, besides the Sins such Persons commit, the Opportunités and Mercies, they have stood out against, shall all be imputed, and sadly enflame the Reckoning at last. Obstinacy does but heap up Wrath in reserve, and the longer we continue in it, the more Work, and the more Sorrow we cut out for our selves, if ever we amend at all. But St. *Augustine* hath added another very dreadful Consideration, which renders even this very suspicious; For, says he, *If he offer thee Grace to Day, take it while it may be had; for thou canst not tell whether he will repeat the Proffer to Morrow. If he give thee Life, and Understanding, and Memory this Week, use them out of Hand, for these are Blessings which no Man can ensure to himself, and some, or all of them, may be taken away from thee, the next.* Aug. Tract. 33. in Joan.

The Holy Prophet begins his Seventy Third Psalm with Magnifying, and Admiring, the Goodness of God to his Servants, to such as are of an upright and *clean Heart*. And yet the main Thing he drives at there, is to represent the dangerous Condition of Wicked Men in Prosperity, and the heavy Justice of God upon those, who, notwithstanding such Prosperity, so far above, so very contrary to their deserts, will yet be wicked still. He forewarns them, that this will not last always, that *God sets them in slippery Places*, and will after a while cast them down into Destruction. That, as a *Dream when one awaketh* so shall this beautiful Image of *Happiness vanish*; and that there is but one way to prevent this Terrour, and Desolation, which is by *drawing near to God*; which, if they shall still refuse to do, he reads their  
in-

V. 27. inevitable Doom, in those Words; *Lo, they that are far from thee shall perish, thou shalt utterly destroy all them that break Faith and commit Fornication against thee.* So that, how good forever God is for a time to the Wicked, this can be no Security, that he intends forever to continue so; much less, from his Kindness to the Godly, can any Relief to the Wicked be inferred. Heaven and Hell are not more distant, Light and Darkness are not more contrary, than his Dealings with these Two sorts of Men.

Psal. 34. For as the same Psalmist observes, *The Eyes of the Lord are over the Righteous, and his Ears are open unto their Prayers. But the Countenance of the Lord is set against them that do Evil, to root out the Remembrance of them from off the Earth.*

It was a Practice very common with false Prophets heretofore, which the true Prophets always exclaimed loudly against, to seduce the People, and uphold them in their Wickedness, by crying *Peace, Peace*, when there was no Peace; Nor indeed, can there possibly be any to the Wicked. *David* hath told us, upon what Terms only we may have Confidence and Hope in God, when he says, *Offer the Sacrifice of Righteousness and put your trust in the Lord.* Then he will lift up the Light of his Countenance upon us, and put gladness in our Hearts, more than in the time that Men's Corn and Wine, and Oyl increased. The sense of Favour and Friendship with a reconciled God will diffuse a more solid and sensible Joy through our Souls, than all the Worldly Prosperity imaginable can yield to those, whose Hearts are most set upon the World.

1 John 3. To the same purpose is that of St. John, *Beloved, if our Heart condemn us not, then have we Confidence towards God. But if our Heart condemn us,*  
God

*God is greater than our Heart, and knoweth all Things.* It is the vainest Thing in the World to talk of Trust in God's Mercy; while our own Consciences fly in our Faces, and reproach us with such Dispositions and Practices, as he hath declared, he cannot approve, and will one Day bring into Judgment.

It may possibly be of some Service in the present Argument, to put my Reader in remembrance, how God hath dealt with several eminent Persons, once high in his Love and Favour, how he hath changed his Affection upon their giving him Offence, and broke that League of Friendship which was once between them; And, in a Word, how strict he hath been in calling them to account, and how severe in inflicting his Punishments. And here, methinks it might abate Men's Security, and take down from their Presumption somewhat at least, would they but in the *first* Place reflect upon the Fall of the Angels. Creatures so honoured in their Creation, endued with Excellencies, the nearest of any, resembling the Perfections of the Divine Nature; in so much, that the Scripture calls them the *Sons of God*, in a more exalted and peculiar Sense, than belongs to any Son, who is not very God. And yet these, for the Commission of one Sin of Pride, and such a Rebellion against the Divine Majesty, as some have imagined to proceed no farther than Thought only; lost all the Priviledges of their Blest Estate; the Love and Favour of God was turned into Hatred irreconcilable, and from the Regions of Bliss, these once glorious Spirits are cast down into Prison, and as *St. Jude* says, *reserved in everlasting Chains under Darknes unto the Judgment of the great Day*; consigned over to Hell,



Hell, and Despair, and eternal Vengeance, without Hope, without Redemption, without any possibility of Escape, or mitigation of their insupportable Torments.

After this, it pleased Almighty God to make himself another Friend, one of Flesh and Blood, designed to succeed into the Happiness, of which those Angels by voluntary Transgression had deprived themselves. This was our First Parent in Paradise, where God conversed with him after a most familiar Manner, and honoured him with signal Instances of his Care and Kindness. He walked and discoursed with him, he gave him Dominion of the Creatures here below, and made him his Vicegerent; He put the fiercest and strongest Animals in subjection under him, brought them before him, that as a mark of Authority, he might determine by what Names each of them should be called. He miraculously created a Help, and a Companion, for Society and Relief to him; he blessed them both, and was exceeding liberal in all possible Demonstrations of Love to them: But, alas! this beautiful Scene was quickly changed into a very melancholly and dismal one. *Adam*, by the commission of one Sin, and that too at the perswasion of another Person, fell from all his glorious Prerogatives, was banished Paradise, condemned to a Life of Labour and Care, of Sorrow and Misery, of Sickness and Pain, to death of Body, and which is worse, to eternal Damnation. Nor did this Calamity terminate in him, but extended to all his Posterity, descended from him after that Guilt was contracted. And this not otherwise to be reversed, but by a painful Repentance, and the Payment of a Ransom, no less in Dignity and Value, than the

the Blessed and Eternal Son of God made Man ; suffering and dying in the same Nature, that had sinned ; and, by his innocent Life and bitter Death, attoning for the Offences of all Mankind ; Whose common Representative this Second *Adam* became, in their Punishment, as the First *Adam* had formerly been, in the Offence by which that Punishment was incurred.

Those Two Wonders of Men, *Moses* and *Aaron*, were of singular Authority, and high in favour with God ; Insomuch, that their Prayers and Intercessions for the People, over whom they presided, never returned empty, and unsuccessful. And yet, when these excellent Persons provoked God at the Waters of Strife, in distrusting his Power, and the Miracles he promised to Work for the preservation of the *Israelitish* Nation, this was interpreted, as so great a Dishonour done to God, that they received a sharp Rebuke, and all their Repentance could not prevail for a Remission of their Crime. The Guilt indeed was taken off, but not the Punishment ; for this consisted in their not being suffered to enter the Land of Promise, but dying, with the rest of their unbelieving Brethren, whose Carcases fell in the Wilderness. They entreated God most earnestly to have this Penalty taken off ; but still the Answer was, *Because* Numb. 20. *ye believed not, to sanctify me in the Eyes of the* 12. *Congregation of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this Congregation into the Land which I have given them.*

It ought to be looked upon, as a particular favour to *Saul*, that God made choice of him to be the First King over his own People. We find him commanding *Samuel* to do him unexampled Honours, commending, and taking expresse care

care of him, crowning his Wars with wonderful Success, and working mighty Deliverances by his Means, from the Yoke of the Philistines, who then grievously distressed his People. And yet afterwards, upon the Breach of one Command, in reserving some of the Spoils taken from *Amalek*, which he had express Orders utterly to destroy; Nay, though he pretended to have saved them out of a Religious Design; we find him rejected utterly by God, degraded from his royal Dignity, delivered up into the Power and Possession of an evil Spirit, reduced to infinite Miseries, and so abandoned at last, as to fall by his own Hands; his Family discontented, his Sons put to reproachful Deaths, and all his Posterity ruined and extinct.

*David*, whom God appointed to reign in his stead, and exalted him from a mean Condition, who excell'd all other Princes in the particular Tenderneſs God had for him, and was honoured with a Title, of *A Man after his own Heart*: yet, when Luxury and Prosperity had betrayed him into Two of the blackest Offences, receives the dreadful Message by *Nathan*, of most heavy Displeasure kindled, and severe Punishments decreed, against him. These were not to be diverted by all his Prayers, and Tears, his Fasting and Humiliation, of which the Book of *Psalms* give us so large an Account. All which make it very evident, that no degree of Favour with God can secure Men from smarting under the Rod of his Justice, if they shall dare to offend him; and that our Saviour's Words admit of no Exception, *Unless ye Repent, ye shall all perish*. The utter Rejection of *Cain*, and his Posterity; The Destruction of the whole World, except *Noah* and his Family, by

a Flood, and that of *Sodom* and *Gomorrhah*, and the neighbouring Cities, by Fire from Heaven; The exemplary vengeance executed upon *Corah* and his Company; and the other Plagues sent upon the *Israelites* for their Idolatry and Rebellion; the sudden Death of *Nadab* and *Abihu* in the Old Testament, and *Ananias* and *Sapphira* and others in the New; These, and many other Examples, are therefore left upon record in holy Writ, to assure us, that *though Hand joyn in Hand the Wicked shall not go unpunished, but that God will repay the Sinner to his Face.*

Who, that considers these Things, will not find himself obliged to confess with *Moses*, that *God is a great God, a mighty and a terrible:* and with *St. Paul*, that *It is a fearful Thing to fall into the Hands of the living God?* For, if God would not pardon so many of these Persons already mentioned, for one single Provocation; if some of them, not at their most instant Request, and upon the most solemn Humiliation; nay, which is infinitely more than all this; If he treated his own most Holy and Divine Son with such unrelenting severity, when he stood in the place of Sinners only, though he had no Sin properly his own; If the bitter Cup might not pass from him, though deprecated thrice with vehement Supplications, with Groans and Tears, with Agonies unspeakable, and Sweats of Blood; What shall become of thee, Presumptuous Sinner, who hast so often, so grievously offended that Divine Majesty? What Shadow of a Reason canst thou have, to hope, that he will deal after an extraordinary manner with thee, and break the stated Measures of his Government and Justice for thy sake? Art thou any better, art thou not indeed much worse, than most of

F f

these?

Deut. 10.  
1:2.

these? Or canst thou produce any Exemption, any Priviledge, peculiar to thy self? Is he not still the same God that he was then, and are not the Rules of Justice eternal and inviolable? Whence then can grow this fond Imagination, that, notwithstanding thy continuing to provoke him, thou shalt at last escape his Vengeance, and find him nothing in thy own Case, but Gentleness and Mercy?

Descend a little lower yet, and from the History of former Ages, consider the Judgments of the present: See how he deals with Mankind now, even under the Covenant of Grace, after that he hath accepted the Reconciliation, made by the Death and bitter Passion of his own dear Son. For, though Mercy now be Triumphant, yet is not Justice laid asleep; but strange and sad Effects of it are offered to thy Observation daily. Consider, how many Millions of wretched Souls are still permitted to remain in Darkness; how many whole Nations, where the Light of the Gospel once shone, in it's brightest lustre, are now relapsed into their primitive Night of Ignorance and Sin; how many, even among Christians, are entangled in dangerous and fundamental Errors; how many, among those who believe aright, dishonour their Christian Profession by heathenish Lives: This will shew the *streightness* of the *Gate*, and the *narrowness* of the *Way*, that leads to Heaven, and how *few they be that go in thereat*. And why so few? not, because sufficient Provision is not made for every Man, for Christ hath given himself a Ransom for all; but, because much the greater part render themselves unworthy of that Salvation, and thrust it away from them, by refusing to comply with the Com-  
mands

Mat. 7. 13.

mands of Repentance and Holiness, the indispensable Conditions, without which no Man ever did, *ever can see the Lord.* If then the Justice of God exert it self in so terrible a manner, without any prejudice to his Mercy; flatter not thy self any longer, as if, notwithstanding that Mercy, he may not damn thee for Sins, which thou hast not only committed with a high Hand, but aggravated with this most inexcusable Aggravation, of making thy presuming upon that Mercy, an Encouragement and Reason for committing them. Heb. 12.

## S E C T. II.

*In what respects God's Mercy is greater than his Justice.*

**I** expect after all this, that the presumptuous Sinner will find some pretence from Scripture it self, as if that were not consistent with this rigour in punishing, and the vast numbers of them, that perish everlastingly, so much superiour to those that are saved. For is this possible, with him, whose *Mercies are over all his Works*, whose *Mercy triumpheth over Judgment*; with Him, *who is slow to anger*, not extreme to mark what is done amiss, and who even when he is angry, *repenteth him of the evil*, and keepeth not his anger for ever? To all this it might suffice to answer in short, that the Scripture is no less ex- Mar. 7. 13,  
press, concerning the Narrowness of the Gate 14.  
that leads to Life, and the fewness of them that go in at it; and the broadness of the Way which leads to Destruction, and the vast Multitudes of wretched Men that walk in it. Our Lord's Authority in this Point will admit of no Dis-

pute; and therefore allowing (as we must) the matter of Fact; I shall now examine, how the Mercy of God, notwithstanding all this, does yet come up to all those Characters given of it in Holy Writ.

*First*, then, The Mercy of God may truly be said to excel his other Attributes, because it is more concerned in the Happiness of Men, than any, or all the rest are, in their Misery and Punishment. The Salvation of them that are saved is entirely from the Mercy of God; He is the Worker, and the proper and principal Cause of it: But the Damnation of them that are lost, is not properly from God, but from themselves. *Hof. 12.6.* *O Israel, thou hast destroyed thy self, says the Prophet, but in me is thy help.* So much in Him, that every good Action we do, every good Thought we think, is to be acknowledged an effect of the Divine Grace and Assistance. And, though there be a Faculty of Freedom and Choice in these Matters, yet does this, in the present corrupt State of Humane Nature bind, and of its own accord determine us to will. And all our Good is owing to those secret and sweet Influences of God's blessed Spirit, working with our Spirits; preventing and moving, assisting, and overruling our Wills and Affections. So that none of the evil Acts, for which Men are damned, proceed from God; he tempts no Man to Sin, but every Man, when he is tempted, follows his own Lusts, and acts without, and against God: But in our Salvation, and the Works, which procure that, we act with, and could not effect them without Him. Herein then Mercy most manifestly triumphs over Justice. Because God crowns his own Works in us, which are not ours entirely and

and originally, but only with regard to our Concurrence with, and consent to, his holy Motions ; but he damns us for those Misdemeanors alone, which are in the strictest Sense our own, and such as he hath no part, nor the least co-operation in.

Secondly, The Mercy of God exceeds his Justice, with regard to the general good Intentions and Desires, which he hath for the Happiness of Mankind. For St. Paul tells us, that God would have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth ; and himself frequently repeats that solemn Protestation, *As I live* Tim. 2. Ezek. 18. Jer. 3. *said the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of a sinner, but rather, that he should turn from his wickedness and live.* Accordingly he gave command that the Gospel, that *Grace of God which bringeth Salvation unto all Men*, should be preached to every Creature, and ordained, that *Jesus Christ* Mark. 16. Heb. 2. *should be made a little lower than the Angels*, for this very purpose, that he by the *Grace of God* *should taste death for every Man.* So that Mercy is the Attribute, which he exercises willingly and freely, and this is extended to all without Exception. But the Exercise of Justice is rather a matter of Necessity and Constraint, and reserved for such only, as by their Obstinacy and undutiful Behaviour, compel him to this Expedient. This our Blessed Lord hath express'd in a very plain and moving manner, when he with Tears in his Eyes uttered that affectionate Lamentation over the Holy City. *O that thou hadst known in this thy day, the things* Lik. 19. *which belong unto thy peace ; but now they are hidden from thine Eyes.* And again. *O Jerusalem, Je-* Mat. 23. *rusalem, thou that killest the Prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I*



*have gathered thy Children together, even as a Hen gathereth her Chickens under her Wings, and ye would not? Behold your House is left unto you desolate.* Here we have an account of the Mercy of God, tendered to the Jews over and over, and upon their refusal of these gracious Offers, then, and not till then, God betakes himself to his Justice. And, though the Miseries he brought upon that inflexible People, prove the Effects of that Justice to have been most amazing and terrible, yet still his Mercy excels, in those many Methods made use of before to reclaim, and prevent them from falling into final Destruction. Which had been done effectually, had they not continued Proof against all the means of Grace, and drawn down that Ruin upon their own Heads, by rejecting and refusing their own Happiness.

*Thirdly,* The Mercy of God exceeds, even towards the Reprobate themselves, and those who are never the better by it, in all its Dispensations towards them, in this Life at least, while they yet continue in a State of Discipline, and Tryal. For, Who can express the infinite Advantages and Opportunities such Men enjoy, and that unconceivable variety of Holy Arts, made use of by God, to draw them to himself? The enduing Men with a Principle of Free-will at first, and putting Life and Death in their own disposal. The assisting that Will with supernatural Assistances to do good; the suggesting to them Holy Thoughts, and checking them inwardly, when they are about to comply with Evil. The inviting and importuning them with affectionate Exhortations, alluring them with Promises, encouraging them with Examples, and sweetning their Duty, with temporal Blessings

sings and Benefits innumerable. And, when these fail of their desired Effect, having recourse to other more awakening Methods ; humbling them with Sickneſs, with Affliction, with gentle and wiſe Corrections of all ſorts : Giving them ſpace and leiſure to Repent, and furniſhing them with Plenty of occaſions to do good : Terrifying them by Threatnings of eternal Punishments, and ſetting before them the diſmal Conſequences of Diſobedience and Obſtinacy, if they will not be prevailed upon to repent and amend. All theſe Diſpenſations, are the natural reſult of Mercy and Kindneſs toward them which render their Obſtinacy inexcusable, and Force the damned themſelves to confeſs, in the miſt of Tortures and Deſpair, that although the Execution of the Divine Juſtice be moſt ſevere and terrible ; yet is it juſt and right ; ſuch as might have been avoided, if they would have been wiſe in time ; ſuch as bears no Proportion with the exceeding Greatneſs of his Mercy, exhibited to them, while the proper ſeaſon of Mercy laſted ; that is, while there was any room left for ſecond and better Thoughts, and the time of living upon Earth made it poſſible for them to reform and improve under it.

Thus then we ſee the Reaſon, why the Scripture ſo often makes mention of the Mercy of God, in conjunction with his Judgments, and his Juſtice, and his Truth ; What an exact Agreement there is conſtantly between them, and what influence, the Conſideration of them ought to have upon our Hearts and Lives ; which is, to keep us from ſo preſuming upon his Mercy, as not to be afraid of his Juſtice ; nor ſo to dread the rigour of his Juſtice, as to deſpair of Mercy. For, in a Chriſtian's Duty, Fear and

Hope should always go hand in hand ; and we never find any of the most eminent and perfect Saints, so transported with the latter, as to disdain, or lay aside the former. But then, it is necessary we distinguish aright, what sort of Fear this is ; not a servile and astonishing terror of Mind, but such as produces the excellent Fruits so often attributed to it, when it is said, that *by the fear of the Lord men depart from evil ; that this is the beginning of Wisdom, and a good understanding have they that do thereafter ; that he who fears the Lord will do good, and look well to his ways, and prepare his Soul, and sanctify the Lord God in his Heart, and many other Passages of the like importance.*

This is the description of that true Godly Fear, so frequently enjoined, so highly commended by the Holy Ghost : That Fountain of Life, that Principle of true saving Knowledge, that Mark and perfection of Religious Wisdom, that precious Gift of God, and Glory of a good Man. *Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord, he hath great delight in his commandments, says the Psalmist ; and the Son of Sirach among many other most desirable Advantages of this Virtue, says ; Who so feareth the Lord, it shall go well with him at the last, and he shall find favour in the day of his Death.* In short, of such as these, we are informed, that God is their Rock and sure Refuge, that he hath laid up plenteous Goodness for them, that he pities, and is as tender of them, as the most affectionate Father, of his own dearest Children ; and that God hath his Eyes ever watchful for their Good, that he will hear their Cry, and help them, and fulfil all their Desire. The want of this Disposition is observed by David to be the Root of the most bold, and impious

Ex-

Psal. 112.  
1.

Eccles. 1.  
13.

Psal 18.  
& 3., &  
103, &  
34. &  
145.

Extravagances : *The wicked is so proud, that he careth not for God, neither is God in all his thoughts. Thy judgments are far above out of his sight, and therefore desistieth he all his Enemies. He says in his heart, God hath forgotten; he hideth away his face, and he will never see it. Wherefore should the wicked blaspheme God, while he doth say in his heart. Tush, thou God carest not for it?* Psal. 10.

It is a great dishonour to Almighty God, and must needs exasperate him highly against us, when we rob him of a part of his Nature, and make him that tame and easy Being, which would be the result of infinite Mercy, without any Mixture of Justice; And to live, as though the Judge of all the Earth would never call us to an Account. Whereas he hath not only declared, that he will bring us into judgment with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil; but hath likewise intimated to us how strict and critical that enquiry will be, by resembling himself to a hard Master, who requires his own again with Usury; who reckons with every Steward for the waste he hath made of his Lord's Goods; who expects an Improvement of all the labour and expence bestowed upon his Fig-tree, and who will justify or condemn us, not by our Actions only, but by our very Words, and Thoughts, and the hidden things of Virtue or Dishonesty. Mat. 25. Luk. 16. Luk. 13. Mat. 12. 1 Cor. 4.

In that Prophetick Complaint of David, which by many Applications made of it to our Blessed Lord, both by himself and his Apostles, we cannot reasonably doubt, but it was principally intended of Jesus Christ, we may take notice, that among the Curses and Calamities there denounced against the Enemies of the Messias, (and such are all wicked Persons) there are these

**Pfal. 69.** these among many others. *Let their Eyes be darkened that they see not. Pour out thy thine indignation upon them, and let thy wrathful anger take hold of them. Add iniquity unto their iniquity, and let them not come into thy righteousness. Let them be blotted out of the Book of the Living, and not be written among the righteous.* I mention this, to shew, that the greatest Curse God can lay upon those he hates, next to the blotting them absolutely out of the Book of Life, and consigning them over irreversibly to eternal Damnation, is, the suffering them to bind one Sin upon another, and to go on securely, without being restrained by any Consideration of the Righteousness and Justice of Almighty God. And hence it is, that those Divines, which extend the Sin of the Holy Ghost beyond that Case of which our Saviour speaks, have placed Presumption in the foremost Rank of those unpardonable Offences, which fell within this Censure. And, the Reason they give for looking upon this to be a Sin against the Holy Ghost, is, that it willfully rejects, and utterly defeats one of the most powerful means made use of by the Spirit of God for reclaiming, and containing us in our Duty, which is the dread of God's angry Justice upon impenitent Sinners.

We may then, in my apprehension, apply St. Paul's Argument, relating to the Temporal Power of Civil Magistrates, to the Justice and eternal Vengeance of the great King and Judge of the whole World. **Rom. 13.** *Wilt thou not be afraid of the Power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the Sword in vain, but executeth wrath upon him that doth evil.* The only way to have a good Confidence and true

true peace of Mind, is to live so well, that we shall not be under any just apprehensions of God's being angry with us. For as St. John says, *Perfect Love casteth out fear*, that is, such a fear 1 Joh. 4. as haunts us with expectations of Vengeance, and is a perpetual Torment to the Mind. But, if Men will still persist in their evil Habits, it is the most unreasonable thing in the World, for such to flatter themselves, and live void of fear; For God frequently calls himself a just Judge, and these are not Words of Course and Form, not an empty Title, that signifies nothing; but such a Character as he will be sure to make good to the uttermost.

If this had been a matter of so little hazard, or importance, as too many secure People fondly persuade themselves; Can we imagine, that St. Peter would ever have given that solemn Exhortation to the Converts, to whom he address'd his Epistle, *If ye call on the Father, who* 1 Pet. 1. *without respect of persons judgeth according to every* 17. *Man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.* Or would St. Paul have urged his *Philippians*, to work out their Salvation with Fear and Phil. 2. 12. Trembling? I acknowledge, that the Apostle does indeed in another Place represent this, as a Privilege peculiar to Christians, that God 2 Tim. 1. 7. *hath not given unto us the Spirit of fear, but of power, and love, and of a sound mind.* But the meaning of that and other Passages of like import, is only this. That the Spirit of the Gospel is not of the same servile kind, with that of the Law, where Men were dealt with like Servants; and Fear was the chief and governing Principle; Rom. 8. 15. for which Reason this is elsewhere termed the *Spirit of Bondage*; But ours is the *Spirit of Adoption*, Gal. 4. 5. and we are treated like Sons. But what then?

then ? Is there no Fear belonging to the Duty of Children ? Yes certainly ; A filial Fear, mixt with Love ; and no less cautious of offending their Father than the Slave is of incurring the Displeasure of the most absolute and tyrannical Master. Only here is the Difference, that these two sorts of Persons obey upon different Motives ; The one merely from Punishment, without regard to the Person he serves ; farther than as his Anger may be of mischievous Consequence ; the Other, out of an affectionate Reverence for the Person obeyed, a grateful Sense of his great Goodness, and the Baseness of doing any thing, which may give disgust to One, who hath shewed himself so bountiful and indulgent, and ought to have a more suitable return made for his Love.

So that the considering God and our selves under the Capacity of Parent and Children, as it intimates the Honour and Advantage of this spiritual and most noble Relation, so does it likewise give another turn and temper to our Actions, and renders our Service cheerful and delightful, and full of reverence and affectionate Desire to please ; in a Word it qualifies our Fear with Love. This is no doubt St. Paul's intention in that known Passage, *You have not received the Spirit of Bondage again to fear ; but ye have received the Spirit of Adoption, whereby we cry Abba Father.* And consequently, you have now another and better Reason for doing what God commands, than either the Jews went upon to their true God, or the Heathens to their false Gods ; Who, generally speaking, only honoured the Deity, they adored, for fear it should hurt them if they did otherwise. This slavish terrour of Mind is therefore a Principle, unfit

unfit for the dignity of a Christian, who is admitted to so high a Relation, and such glorious Prospects ; and of that servile Disposition we are to understand those Texts of the New Testament, which forbid us to serve God out of Fear. For the right understanding whereof there are however Two Things to be observed.

The *First* is, that though this be a Spirit, in which we are not allowed to rest finally, as the only and best Motive of a Christian Obedience. Yet is it, not only a lawful, but exceeding useful Motive, to set out upon ; and such, as commonly is the first Consideration, which awakens Sinners to Repentance, and makes them look about them. Hence is it, with great Propriety, of Expression, termed *The Beginning of Wisdom*. And therefore you find the old Prophets among the Jews ; *Jonas* in his Embassy to the *Ninivites*, and *John Baptist* to those who resorted to his Baptism, all of them, exciting hardened Sinners to amendment, by setting before them the imminent Dangers and Punishments, which must otherwise overtake them. The constant Burden of all their Exhortations is in effect the same with that in the Third of St. *Matthew*, *And now, behold, the Ax is laid unto the root of the Tree ; every Tree therefore that bringeth not forth good Fruit is hewn down, and cast into the Fire*. But, when Men are convinced of the Necessity of this Change, have entred in, and made some Progress, and are acquainted with the ways of Holiness ; When they can look up to God, no longer as a provoked Judge, but now, as a reconciled Father and Friend, then they find the filial Affection growing, and getting Ground, till at last they come to that posture of Soul, meant by St. *John*, when he says,  
*perfect*



1 John 4 perfect love casteth out fear. Upon which St. Augustine's remark is, that Fear is in the quality of a  
 1. Ep. Jo- Servant, sent before to make Way, and fit up a Room  
 an. for it's Mistress, Love; in the Hearts of them that serve God. And, when the Mistress comes to take possession, the Servant having done his Business, modestly retires. But where this Fear does not come at all, and open the Passage, there it is impossible for the Love of God to take up it's Dwelling.

The Second Thing, fit to be observed upon this Occasion, is, that, though Men very perfect are less sensible of this Fear, than others, or have almost quite shook it off; yet it is so incorporated with their Love and Reverence for God, as to be exceeding profitable, and even necessary, for all Christians, whose Life is not so perfect, nor Charity so fervent, as that mentioned by St. John. They were Men of no mean Character, to whom our Blessed Saviour  
 Luk. 12. 5. gave that direction, *Fear him, who after he hath killed the Body, hath Power to cast both Body and Soul into Hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him.* And St. Paul to his Corinthians, thought it no disparagement to their Proficiency, to urge them upon this Motive to Obedience. We must all  
 2 Cor. 5. appear before the Judgment-Seat of Christ, that  
 10, 11. every one may receive the Things done in his Body, according to that he hath done, whether it be Good or Bad: Knowing therefore the Terror of the Lord, we persuade Men. Nay, he is so far from supposing, that the Apprehensions of this kind were unworthy of those new Converts, as even to declare, that he himself was not without some Concern, lest he should miscarry at last, and that he made this an Incentive to his Mortification and Perseverance. For what else can we gather from that very remarkable Passage,

*I keep under my Body, and bring it into Subjection, 1 Cor. 9. lest that by any Means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a Cast-away.*

Since then, that eminent Pattern of Christian Perfection, St. Paul himself, notwithstanding his great Prerogatives above common Believers, was not however, wholly void of this awful 1 Cor. 4. Sense of God's Justice; since he, who declares he knew nothing, by himself, yet did not think he was thereby justified, but waited, with a becoming Humility, for the Judgment of that Lord, who must finally pronounce upon him; What manner of Men, ought those to whom I am at present addressing my self, to be? How very apprehensive of the Divine Vengeance, whose Consciences Reproach them, with so many, so grievous Offences; for which, if they know any Thing at all of Religion, they must be convinced, that a very severe and exemplary Vengeance is due? For this (says St. Paul to the Ephesians) ye know, that no Whoremonger, nor un- Eph. 5. 5. clean Person, nor covetous Man, who is an Idolater, hath any Inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ, and of God. And immediately after, to drive this Warning deeper, and prevent that fatal security, with which, either others who strive to entice us to Sin, or our own treacherous Hearts by their own naughty Suggestions, are exceeding apt to flatter us: he adds, Let no Man deceive v. 6, 7. you with vain Words; for because of these Things cometh the Wrath of God upon the Children of Disobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them.

It seems then, whoever they be, that would persuade us, that such Practices, as these, will be pardoned, and easily passed by; Whoever relies upon the Mercies of God for escaping the Punishment due to them; These Men deceive

us,

us, and if we rely upon this Opinion, we Build without any Foundation. They who commit such Things are Children of *Disobedience*, or, as the Word might properly enough be rendered, Children of *Unbelief*; For the great occasion of their acting in such Contradiction to God's Commands, is, the want of a thorough Conviction, and serious Sense, of his Justice and his Threatning. And hence they are emboldened to proceed in a rash Presumption upon his Mercy; till at last they have provoked God beyond all Patience, and his Anger breaks out upon them, like a Fire, not to be quenched, till it have utterly consumed them. The Apostle's Advice therefore in this Case, is, not to *partake* with such Men in their Folly; not to act as they do, and, for the prevention of this, not to think as they do. But, to consider, that Anger and Judgment are with God, as well as Goodness and Mercy; that, if we will not fear these, while that may be profitable to our Reformation, we shall feel and perish under them, when it will be too late to amend. And I cannot conclude this Chapter better, than to desire every one of my Readers, that he would seriously lay to Heart the Apostle's Advice to these *Ephesians*, and make their Case his own. As it will most certainly be, in one respect or other: For, either he will consider this Wrath of God, and come to a speedy Reformation for prevention of it; or else he will continue among the Children of Disobedience, incredulous and obstinate, refusing or deferring his Holy Purposes of Amendment, upon a vain imagination, that God's Goodness is never to be wearied out with Provocations; and then that Wrath will most assuredly come upon

on him, to his utter Destruction of Body and Soul.

## CHAP. VI.

*A Sixth Impediment to Holy Resolution. De-  
ferring our Repentance out of a vain Hope  
of doing it to better Advantage hereafter.*

THE Reasons already urged for Repen-  
tance are so cogent, and the Necessity of  
amending our Lives, at one time or other, so  
very apparent; that few, or none, who give  
themselves leave to think at all, find it possible  
to evade them. But still, as Men will never  
want some pretence against what they are loth  
to do, there is another Fallacy in this Matter,  
no less dangerous than any of the former. That,  
I mean, of putting off to a farther Day, a work  
which even they who delay it, profess very hear-  
tily to intend, and firmly resolve upon. But  
still, this Day is made longer, and more  
distant, till at last Almighty God, in whose  
Hands all the Periods of our Time are, do at  
last shut them out from any future Oppor-  
tunities, and send such Wretches to suffer the  
Pains of a miserable Eternity, in the next, who  
have abused the precious Talent of Time  
entrusted with them in this present World.  
Thus are Men frequently prevented, and over-  
taken with the Divine Justice, and have neither  
the Leisure, they fondly promise to themselves,  
for growing better, nor the Pardon of their  
past Offences, in consideration of a bare Inten-  
tion to forsake them. And it may very truly  
be affirmed, that more Souls perish by this one

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Deceit,

Deceit, than by all the other Snares and Subtleties of the Devil besides. He understands perfectly well, how nicely this Cheat is calculated; how likely to succeed; and therefore, he pyles it above any other; and is content, people should Design well, provided he can but stave them off from putting those Designs in Execution.

He considers much better, than we our selves are wont to do, of what fatal Consequence delays are in a Matter so absolutely necessary, and of such high Importance, as our Conversion and Salvation. He sees, how one Sin makes way for, and draws on another, and a greater; that the Man, who is not ready and fit to day, will be much less so to morrow; that Custom gets Ground, and grows into Nature; that inveterate Diseases are not to be cured without much Difficulty, and a very painful Application; that God withdraws that Grace, which Men neglect to use, and without which they cannot reform; that his Justice and Truth are irrevocably engaged, for the Punishment of every Crime unrepented of; and that our Delays exasperate, and arm that Justice against our selves. He is duly sensible of the Hazards and uncertainty of this frail Life of ours; how many surprising and unseen Accidents lie in wait to destroy it every Day and Hour; how fast the Obstructions to do Good multiply upon us; and, though we should be spared, and be allowed space, yet how wretchedly the Disposition to repent will decay in us.

All these Things our Ghostly Enemy is thoroughly apprised of; He gives these Reasons their due weight, though we do not; and the Arguments, which cannot prevail upon us to hasten

hasten our Conversion, move him effectually, to find means of protracting it. Men, that are Christians at all, cannot be so blind, as not to see, that Repentance is established, as an indispensable Condition of their Safety and Happiness. And it is not hard for them to satisfy their own Consciences, that the Objections and Difficulties in bar to a Religious Life, are by no means a Balance against the Advantages of it. It is therefore to little purpose, to attack Men in a Way, so manifestly contrary to their own Reason. But he hath one reserve left, and takes refuge in this Persuasion, to delay, at last; He keeps these Truths from entering any farther than Speculation; and possesses them with an Imagination, that some more favourable opportunity will offer hereafter, for putting them in Practice. So that, whatever inconveniences they find at present, in changing their course of Life, it is but having Patience, and waiting a little longer, till they are gone off; and then they shall be able to become new Creatures, with all the Ease and Advantage imaginable.

This Cheat St. *Augustin* complains of from his own Experience. For, after a full Conviction, that no Salvation was to be obtained without amendment of Life, yet he was not free, in setting about that amendment. There was one, ever and anon suggesting to him, *stay a little longer*, and *still a little longer*, till at last he found there was no end of this Seducement; And when the First, and Second, Period was come, the same Importunity was renewed for a Third and a Fourth; and would have been so for ever, had not he taken up a noble Resolution, fallen in with the Assistances of Grace, and

manfully burst through his Chains at once ; with that most rational Reflection: *Why should I say to Morrow any more? What I am sensible must be done, why should I not do it this very instant?* And this indeed was the only Method of doing his great Affair with Success.

Were we but willing to detect the Fallacy and Danger of this Temptation, there would need no other Consideration, to manifest it to us, than only this ; That, whatever Objections we suppose to lie against our Good Resolutions and effectual Reformation at present, will not abate, but daily grow upon us, and gather Strength by delay. And consequently, whatever difficulty we may find in the Undertaking, to discourage us now, Matters will be but the worse, at any time, that we can possibly propose to our selves hereafter.

1. The longer we continue in Sin, the greater will the Power of Custom be upon us ; And, when once evil Habits come to plead Prescription, it will be a hard Thing to overthrow them. In this I may appeal to every Man's own Experience, who hath made the Tryal upon Drunkenness, or Uncleanneſs, or Swearing, or any other Sin, which he had long been accustomed to. And, if he found it so laborious an attempt, to root out any old Vice thoroughly ; let him from thence make a Judgment, how much Delays must needs add to the Difficulty of abandoning all sorts of Vice, and becoming a new Man in every point.

2. Again, These Habits are to be vanquished, only by the assistance of God's Grace ; and this is suspended upon certain Conditions : One of which is, to be withdrawn from them, who do not improve it to the Purposes, for  
which

which it was given. So that, by our deferring to change our wicked Courses, we do not only increase the Difficulty, and cut our selves out every Day more and more Work to do; but we lose the only means of finishing that Work, and forfeit the Advantages, without which the Conversion, we pretend to make is, so far from being rendred easier, that it becomes, not so much as practicable.

3. And farther yet, as the Power of Grace abates, so does that of Sin, and the Dominion of the Tyrant and Enemy of Souls, gain Ground upon us. He by Degrees will enlarge and establish his Usurpation, till it advance into an arbitrary and absolute Government: exceeding hard, and by our own proper force, impossible to be dispossessed again.

4. It is likewise to be remembred, that, although we have by Nature a Principle of Freedom and Choice, yet is there not any Thing in the World more warped by Degrees than the Will of Man; It tends strongly to such Things, as Custom and frequent Repetition have left it inclining to. This is the Case, even in Virtuous Actions, and Good Dispositions; where we go against the grain of natural Corruptions; But in Evil and Vicious Customs, the Reason is a great deal stronger; because here Custom is seconded by Inclination. And therefore, they who abandon themselves to the frequent commission of Sin, do go as far as it is possible to go, to fix this Will down to one sort of Object, and even extinguish the Privilege of choosing in their Minds.

5. Nor is this the Unhappiness of the Will only, but all our other intellectual Faculties are depraved and debauched, by customary sinning.



The Understanding is darkned, and less capable of discerning ; The Judgment is bribed, and perverted, and less impartial in determining ; The Affections have a more fatal Byass put upon them, and the Appetite is every Day more disorderly and extravagant, in its Motions and Desires. In a word, All a Man's sensual Parts and Passions grow more heady and exorbitant, are more bold and mutinous, shake off the Yoke of Reason and Religion, and are more impatient of restraint, the longer they are indulged, and connived at, in this Rebellion.

Let any Man now lay all these Things together, and then let him state the Matter indifferently, and see, whether he can suffer his Judgment to be so grossly imposed upon, as once to imagine, that it is more likely, his good Resolutions should take better Effect hereafter, than they may do at present : Hereafter, I say, when Custom shall have got more Power, and Sin have taken deeper Root ; When the Devil shall have settled himself in his Possession ; When the Assurances and Recruits of Grace shall be drawn off, and the Man left to Combat with a stronger Enemy, and a less Force ; When thy Soul is more distempered, and the Infection hath spread it self through every Part ; When the Judgment is depraved, the Will perverted, the Understanding muffled up, the Good Inclinations grown cold and languishing, the Passions enflamed, the Body and its Senses corrupted, the Strength spent, and all the Man in a general disorder.

Do not we see by Experience, that the only Way to preserve a leaky Ship, is to pump out the Water, and to clear the Hold, and stop the Leaks with all possible Speed ? Do we not

find,

find, that the longer any House is suffered to run to Ruin, the more Trouble and Expence it will cost to Repair it? Is it not evident, that the more Blows we give the Nail, the faster hold it takes, and the more Pains must be taken to draw out again that which was so far driven in? And is not the Case the very same, when we bind one Sin upon another, and by Perseverance suffer Vice to be so strongly riveted into our Souls; And is not the Absurdity as manifest, when Men, thus aggravating their Misery, do it upon a Pretence of finding easier Redress, when Matters are worse with them?

This puts me in mind of a certain Emblematical Representation of this Matter, related in an old Author by way of Vision, to a certain Hermit. The manner whereof is as follows. A Labourer was hewing Wood, and had made up a large Burden, which he designed to carry off upon his Back: But, finding it too much for him to carry, he threw it down again, and heaped on a great deal more. Then he tryed at it again, but feeling it now much more above his Strength, than before; and falling into a Rage, he threw on twice the Quantity; hoping, by this means, to make it at last portable. The Person to whom this was represented stood amazed at this wretched Man's Stupidity; till informed, that all that Figure was a most exact Image of the senseless and ridiculous Behaviour of Sinners; Who, because they are encountred with some uneasiness in getting quit of a few evil Habits at the beginning, put off their Repentance, and add to their own Burden, by contracting a much deeper Guilt; and consequently they draw upon themselves the necessity of a much more laborious amendment, than their

Circumstances required, before this additional weight of Sin, had rendred that more difficult, which they, in despight of Reason and common Sense, flattered themselves with a vain Thought of rendring more easy by this means.

St. *Augustin*, in his Exposition of the Eleventh of St. *John*, takes notice, that in raising *Lazarus* from the Dead, our Saviour shews more Signs of Difficulty, and vehemence of Effort, than in any other of his Miracles. He Prays, he Weeps, he Groans, he is troubled in Spirit, and yet others he restored to Life with all the Ease imaginable, one single, one authoritative Word. Now the ground of the Difference is in the time of *Lazarus* continuing dead; he was buried, he had lain Four Days, and Putrefaction had passed upon him. Not after all, that even these extraordinary Circumstances were any check upon Omnipotence; to which all things are equally possible; equally easy: But our Lord was pleased to use more solemnity in this, than in common Miracles, for the sake of that mystical Interpretation and Resemblance it carries, to Men *dead in Trespasses and Sins*. Who, when the Four Degrees of sinful Aggravations have passed upon them, when they delight in, consent to, actually execute, and by frequent repetition habituate themselves to, and long persist in, Wickedness; When a Sinner I say is thus buried, and spiritual Corruption hath thus passed upon him; Such a one is with great Difficulty raised to Life again: And, whenever he is so, 'tis by most miraculous Mercy on God's part, and many Tears, and Groans, and deep anguish of Spirit, on his own.

The Reason of this is obvious, and in Nature it cannot be otherwise. For the longer any Dif-

Disease continues, the more obstinate it grows; and cannot be removed, like a Sickness taken in time, and before the Mass is vitiated. And, if this be so, what a Madness is it to put off Repentance and Amendment to old Age, or a Bed of Languishing; especially when, besides the prevalence of the Distemper, that very Age and Infirmary will add yet more, to the difficulty and hazard of the Cure? For, if we think it grievous to Repent now, to Fast, and Pray, to afflict our Souls, and mortify our Bodies, in the vigour of Youth, How shall we be able to do it, when Years or Impotence have brought us so low, that all we can do will scarce suffice to cherish and support us? If, after Two, or Three, or Four Years continuance, the Torrent of our sinful Affections can hardly be resisted, how impetuous a Tide must we expect to bear down upon us, after a Twenty Years longer Indulgence? Would you not think that Traveller forsaken of common Sense, who having a heavy Baggage to carry, and choice of Horses strong, and in good Case, should make use of none of these, but lay his Load upon some poor, underlimbed, jaded Beast, that can scarce carry it self? And yet that Man acts every whit as unreasonably, that wasts his Strength in Jollity, and reserves the laborious part of his Life, to that Condition, which hath much ado to sustain its own natural Weakness.

But I have something else of considerable Moment to urge, besides the Indiscretion and extreme Folly, of so preposterous a Course. Think then, I beseech you, how manifestly unjust, how basely ungrateful, we are to Almighty God, from whom we have already received so many and so valuable Blessings in hand, and  
pre-

Mal. 1.

pretend to expect so glorious a Reward, as the Kingdom of Heaven hereafter, to put him off with the least, and last, and worst part of our Life; and to assign him only that which it is very uncertain, whether we shall ever have in our Power to pay. Think, whether he, who claims, and hath an undoubted Right to, and deserves, the Whole of our time, will be satisfied with such a wretched Remnant of it, if ever it should be at our own disposal. We find God, by his Prophet, declaring those Men accursed, who when they have whole and sound Cattle, offer the *Blind*, and the *Lame*, and reserve that only for Sacrifice, which is good for nothing else. And shall not we most justly fall under the same Condemnation; if, while we have plenty of Youth and Health, all this be squandered away in the extravagance of our own Lusts, and nothing, but a feeble maimed old Age, be devoted to his Service?

We find it forbidden in the old Law, to have two different Measures, the one, to sell by to a Friend, the other, to an Enemy; The Iniquity, I am now reproofing, is yet more notorious. Here Men mete out their Lives by two most different and unequal Measures; They do it in prejudice to themselves, and to their Rightful Owner. To God, their best Friend, they allot the short, the decrepit, the uncertain Season of Gray Hairs, and feeble Limbs, and decayed Parts; to his and their own Enemy, the World, and the Devil, they are Liberal, nay, even Profuse, and give them the much greater, the better, the surer Measure, of a stout and robust Body, of sprightly Wit, and a sound Understanding. And how must this be needs resented, by him who declares a false Balance

Prov 11.

lance an Abomination, and a true weight his Delight?

What reason can the most partial Man in the World frame to himself, why God should take this usage at our Hands; or if he would condescend to take, why we should offer it to him? What colour of Justice or Equity is there, why, when the World, and the Flesh, and the Devil, which we solemnly renounce at the instant of our being made Christians, have had the best and choice of our Time, and our Pains, we should think to thrust our old Bones, worn out with the Drudgery of Sin, upon God, and have the impudence to make him a Present of their leavings? Must his Enemies be regaled with the Wine, and can we find in our Heart to entertain him with only the dregs and last droppings of the Vessel? Do we not know, that he reserved the first of all Sacrifices for the Altar, and what was the meaning of this Ordinance, but, that God requires the very best of what we have, to be dedicated to his Use and Service? Be wiser then for shame, and follow that advice of the Preacher, *Remember now thy Creatour in Ecclef. 12. the days of thy Youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.*

But here again, Think once more, what will be thy Fate, if this time, which thou thus unjustly reservest for God, should never come at all. Reflect with thy self, how many thy own Eyes have seen cut off in the midst of their Days; and surprized with Death, before their purposes of Reformation came to any effect: How many Examples of another kind canst thou recollect, of Men who proposed and promised to be wondrous Good, when they grow Old, and yet,

yet, though suffered to arrive at that Age, were even then, as little disposed to amend, and as solicitous to find out fresh excuses for putting the day of Repentance still far from them, as ever they were, in the heat and gayety of Youth? How many unhappy Miscreants have driven off this necessary Work, till the very Hour of Death; and when that Hour drew on, have shewed as little signs of remembering their own Condition, as they did formerly in the most perfect Health? Alas! there are too many, who dye no less like Brutes than they had lived all along; and, after forgetting God the rest of their time, forget themselves as much in these last Moments. O would to God the Wickedness of the present Age did not furnish us with too frequent Instances of this fatal Stupidity! But the more of these we see, the less excusable shall we be at last, if their Misery be not our warning. One would be almost tempted to imagine, that the sensual and worldly Wretches, who live in such open defiance of Christianity, had never heard of any other place after this World, nor once been told of any Account to be rendred of their Behaviour while in the Body. When they feel Death approach, they are very nice and careful in making their Wills, in disposing of their Estates, as if these being well settled would affect them after they are gone: But what shall become of their great, their only Treasure, their precious immortal Soul, they seem as little concerned, as if in reality there were no such thing. And no doubt, as they dye like Men of this Perswasion, so shall they live to all Eternity, abandoned to all those Miseries they express'd no concern to avoid, and deprived of all that Bliss  
and

and Glory, which they never thought it worth their while to be at any trouble to obtain.

But I have not done with this Argument even yet. I will put the very fairest of the Case, and ( setting aside all the former Reasons, which yet I assure my self are unanswerable ) am content for once to suppose, that the Business of Repentance could be performed as easily, as conveniently, as certainly in Old Age, or Sickness, as it can be in a more easy, or more vigorous Season of our Lives. I will suppose too, that God will not fail to accept it, and make it effectual. Yet, even upon these Terms, what Man in his Wits, who believes the Gospel-Covenant, would put things upon this Issue? For do but consider how much Time here is lost, how many Opportunities slip, and how many good Works omitted, which might have added infinitely to the value of our Service, and the degrees of our Happiness. In Matters of worldly Advantage, every one is eager to be in with the foremost, and no one cares to stay for the refuse of the Market. If a wealthy City were to be sacked, no Soldier is so mortified to the Thoughts of Booty, to let his Fellows plunder to day, and take up with that little of the worst of the Spoil, which shall be left to Morrow: No prudent Man, that thought to make his Fortune, would manage himself at this rate. Now *the Kingdom of Heaven*, ( as our Blessed Lord Mat. 11. expresses it ) *suffers violence, and the violent take it by force.* The Good and Zealous Christians crowd in with a holy Emulation, and every one is eager to enrich himself with the best of the Spoil; that is, they labour by abounding in good Works here, to lay up and secure to themselves so much the greater Treasure hereafter. They  
know



know that *according as every man sows, so shall he also reap*; and therefore they lose no time, but *sow plenteously, that they may reap plenteously*. And is it not a most wretched folly, a most perverse Negligence in us, to be contented with a less when we may attain to a higher, and a brighter Crown? Do we pretend to think Heaven our Happiness, and shall we not labour to be as happy as possibly we can? *Now then, as the* 2 Cor. 6.  
 2. *Apostle says, is the accepted time; now is the day of Salvation.* Now is the Season of fighting, if we would be glorious Conquerours; now is the time of taking the Spoil, if we desire Treasure in Heaven; now is the sale of that Pearl of great price, if we would approve our selves wise Merchants; now is the Seed time, if we hope for a joyful Harvest. If we let this time slip through our Fingers, our Laurels will fade, our Sale will be over, our Booty will be taken out of our Hands, our Season of Sowing will be past; In a Word, that Observation of the wise Man, would do well to be applyed to this Mat-  
 Prov. 10.  
 6. *ter in a spiritual Sense, He that gathereth in Summer is a wise Son, but he that sleepeth in Harvest is a Son that causeth shame.*

But, if this Consideration have not its due weight, neither (and what weight indeed ought not a Consideration to have, which concerns a thing of infinite Importance, and a Doom irrevocable to all Eternity?) Yet at least, think how much a greater Debt thou contractest, and what fresh Obligations every day intangle thee in, when thy Conversion is deferred, and a larger Arrear of Sin charged upon thy Conscience. This is tying Knots every hour, and contriving new Intricacies, which must one day be all unravelled again: 'Tis like  
 loading

loading thy Stomach with Meat sure to make thee Sick ; and such as must be disgorged, or it will cost thee thy Life. That is, heaping together new Matter for Sorrow, for deeper remorse, for more confounding shame ; 'tis doing, that which thou wouldst one day give the World it had never been done : 'Tis so, I mean allowing the best of the Case, that thou do repent before it be too late, and that God accept thy Repentance ; but otherwise Wo, eternal Wo to thee, for thou heapest up Wrath, and Vengeance, and Torments unspeakable, upon thy poor Soul for ever and ever. But I say, supposing thou, have hereafter those offers of Grace renewed to thee, which thou most ungratefully refuseth now ; yet this Laughter must be paid for in abundance of Tears, thy Heart must then bleed, every Vein of it, for those sinful Pleasures, in which it now revels with such a frantick Delight ; and, if thou do not curse the day, in which thou mightest have repented, but wouldst not, thy Repentance will stand thee in no stead. This, if thou art a Christian, thou knowest before-hand, and what a madness is it then, deliberately and in cold Blood, to contrive so vast an increase to thy own Sorrow ? If thou think, that God will pardon thee, and this Presumption give thee Confidence to persist in offending him, what horrid Ingratitude is this, to so gracious a Lord ? If thou imagine there is no Forgiveness in store for thee, what desperate Fool-hardiness is this, thus to tempt thy everlasting Ruin, by provoking a God, who is an avenger of Evil, and whose Power is so unlimited, that he can punish thee at his Pleasure, beyond what thou art able to think or fear ?

So

So that let the Sinner put the Case any way, it will still be against him. If he never Repents, every Sin he commits is heaping fresh Fuel upon his own Head, and heating his Furnace seven times hotter than before. If he does, yet he must one day lament and be deeply afflicted for this very delay, and so he does a thing, which he must either perish by, or most heartily wish undone again. The amends he endeavours to make by his Sorrow, must bear proportion to the heinousness and the number of his Sins, to the Power of his Habits, and the length of his past wicked Courses. And the deeper the Sore is, the deeper must be the Incision, and the more painful the Plaister that searches and cleanses it from an inveterate Corruption. For it is not enough to leave our Sins, unless we do it with such marks of Humiliation and Contrition, as express a just Indignation at our own Folly, as does in some Sense execute the Punishment due to a them upon our selves, and shew, that were it in our Power, we are desirous to make Satisfaction to that Goodness and Honour of God, which our Offences have injured and abused, according to the Measure of those Indignities we put upon him.

Thus a long Habit of Evil, must have a long Repentance; a deep Guilt requires a deep Remorse. And, would any Man of sober Thought tear open his Wounds after this manner, when he knows, that the Consequence of enflaming them must be, to be healed with a sharper Corrosive, and a more tedious Application? Can there in the World be a more unnatural Cruelty, than thus to drive Thorns into our own Flesh, which will be sure to fester, and if they do not gangrene and prove Mortal, cannot however be drawn out again,

again, without insupportable Anguish ? Should we not think that Man fit for *Bedlam*, that to gratify his Palate, would drink of a poisoned Cup, when he was fairly warned of the Ingredients before, and certainly convinced, that a raging Fever will follow upon it ; that either his Life must pay for the Pleasure, or his Bowels be rackt and torn with infinite Torture to save it ? If this be not Folly, if this be not Phrenzy, we are yet at a loss what can deserve to be called so. And if this be not the true stating of the Sinner's Case, who puts off his Repentance to a long Day, in a vain Confidence, of finding it more for his Convenience, to enjoy the Delights of Sin in the mean while, and of repenting upon easier terms then, I appeal to every impartial Reader. *Remember this therefore and shew yourselves Men, call it again to mind, O ye Transgressors.* Isa 46. 8.

## SECT. II.

*The Example of the Thief pardoned upon the Cross considered. And the Doubtfulness of a Sinner's Conversion at his Death.*

THE Sinner, there is little doubt, will not yet give up his treacherous Reasonings for vanquished, having still so fair, and as he imagines, so strong a Refuge for his delays in reserve, as the Example of the Penitent Thief, pardoned at his last Hours upon the Cross, and translated from thence into Paradise, to be with Christ in Bliss that very Day, and this without all the painful Qualifications of such a long and bitter Repentance, as I have been saying, is the very best a Man can hope for, who hath continued

tinued all his Days in a State of Sin and Impenitence. This is an Instance, much in the observation and esteem of Men, who indulge wicked Habits. And we are sure to hear it urged with great Confidence, in bar to the necessity of a speedy Reformation, when we press such to it. And without all dispute, This is a Case, which may and ought to be matter of great Comfort to every Man, who finds himself reduced to his last Stake. Especially when, as is usual in such Circumstances, the Devil tempts them to despair of God's Mercy, and to give themselves up for lost; which it is not at any time fit for them to do. For the same God, who rescued that great Malefactor from eternal Destruction, at his last Hour, can likewise, nay and will, save all them, who truly and sincerely turn to him, though it be at their last Hour. But the great Misfortune is, that Men do not so much attend to the real Comforts, which this Case affords, as study for, and flatter themselves with false Ones, and so, by understanding and using this Passage amiss, make that which should encourage their Repentance, serve a quite contrary Purpose, and harden them in Impenitence.

For there are many things to be considered in order to set this Passage in its true Light, and informing us thoroughly, what Supports belong to us from it. As for Instance, Though many catch at this Example very greedily, and challenge a right in the Consequences deduced from it, yet after all, This is but one particular Act of Christ, upon a particular Occasion; and we have no exprefs Warrant given us from Scripture, or Reason, for drawing it into a general Rule. How frequent a thing is it with Temporal Princes, now and then to extend Mercy

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to a condemned Malefactor, and to pardon him at the very time and Place of Execution? And yet no Body argues so wildly from hence, as to suppose, that this gives every sentenced Criminal a Right to depend upon the same Favour. Because this is an extraordinary Act of free Grace, beside the common Measures of Justice and Government, and neither shewed, nor promised to all the Subjects in general. Moreover; This Pardon of the penitent Thief was a special Miracle of Mercy, reserved for the Manifestation of Christ's Glory, and Power to forgive Sins, to be thus exhibited, at a Season of his lowest Humiliation and Contempt.

Again. This Instance of Favour followed upon a singular and unparallel'd Confession of Christ, made by that Thief, at a critical Juncture, when all the World besides had forsaken our Lord, when the very Apostles themselves either doubted, or at least had for the present lost all Perswasion and Belief, of his Divine Nature and Perfections.

Once more. This Confession was at such a time, when that Thief had no Opportunity of being Baptized, no Space left for common Repentance, and consequently this unusual Dispensation of Grace was necessary then, as the only means remaining to save a Man, who had done all, that in his Circumstances was possible to be done. And it is generally allowed, that of any Man at his first Conversion, no more is required, than a stedfast Faith, a hearty Sorrow for Sins past, and a sincere Resolution of living better for the future, ( if the party be at Years of Discretion, and have committed actual Sins, and have longer to live ) and from thence to proceed to Baptism, and the ordinary

Methods of Salvation. So that the same Disposition which qualifies others for the Gospel-Covenant, and the regular means of Grace, might qualify this Person, who had no room left for those means, for Heaven and Happiness. But, that I may not seem to advance these Notions without sufficient Authority, I shall desire my Reader to observe, how the most eminent and pious Saints have delivered their Opinions concerning this Matter.

Serm. 120.  
de Temp.

St. *Augustine* particularly discourses at large to this purpose. "It is, says he, a most incurable Evil, when a Man abandons himself to Vice, so intirely as to forget, that God will call him to an Account for his Actions. And the reason why I look upon this to be a desperate Case, is, that a more grievous Punishment of Sin cannot possibly fall upon us, than to be forsaken of all fear and remembrance of the dreadful Judgment to come. But, my beloved Brethren, to prevent all Danger of Security and Remissness in this important Affair, which may arise from the uncommon Happiness of the Thief converted upon the Cross; and, that none of you may wickedly reason thus in his own Heart, why should my guilty Conscience give me Trouble, or the Wickedness of my profligate Life make me afraid, when I see that this Man's Sins were all forgiven in a moment? We must consider, not only, how short the time of his Belief, and how sudden his Conversion was, but withall, how zealous his Devotion was, and how perfect his Faith, which exerted it self so vigorously at a time when that, even of the Just, did stagger and despond. Again, let them who depend upon this Thief's Example,

“ ample, shew, that they imitate his Example  
“ indeed ; let them produce the same Evidences  
“ of their Belief, and then I may allow them to  
“ promise themselves the same Grace and Hap-  
“ piness. Alas ! my Friend, the Devil puts this  
“ pretence of Security into thy Head, that he  
“ may thereby work thy Destruction. And it  
“ is much to be feared, that innumerable Mul-  
“ titudes of unwary Souls have perished upon  
“ a false Confidence in this deceitful Hope.  
“ That Man deludes himself most miserably,  
“ and makes a jest of Sin and eternal Damnati-  
“ on, upon a vain Imagination, who thinks  
“ that the Mercy of God will come into his Re-  
“ lief at the last Moments of his Life. Nothing  
“ is more provoking, more abominable in the  
“ sight of God, than for a Man to put no re-  
“ straint upon the Sins and Follies of his Youth,  
“ upon a pretended purpose of Repenting, and  
“ making amends for all in Sickness, or Old  
“ Age. This happy Penitent, (and therefore  
“ happy, because he did not industriously lay  
“ Snares and Obstructions in his own way, but  
“ readily laid hold on Christ, who is himself  
“ *the Way*,) took Life by violence, as it were,  
“ and made infinite advantage of his own  
“ Death. He did not wilfully deferr the time  
“ of Salvation, he did not by a treacherous De-  
“ ceit, put the State of his Soul to all Eternity,  
“ upon that single Issue of his last Hour ; he  
“ did not obstinately reserve his Conversion to  
“ his dying Breath ; he had not any knowledge  
“ of Christ, or his Truth, before that time.  
“ For had he had any, we may inferr from his  
“ Behaviour, that he who was first in the King-  
“ dom of Heaven, would not have been the last  
“ among the Apostles.



Thus we see, how far this Holy Father was from thinking, that this single Instance was to be depended upon, as an universal Standard, for the Remission of grievous Offenders; And upon what Grounds it was, that he thought otherwise. Not from any want of readiness in Christ to receive all Penitents according to his Promise: For this he does to every one, who truly turns to him, as gladly as he did it to this Thief. But in regard that every one is not in the same Circumstances, nor hath the same Measure of Grace afforded him, nor the same Opportunities for repenting as he ought, at his last Hour. The general Method of proceeding is, that Men are dealt with according to their Works, and such sort of Persons as they choose to live, such God suffers them to dye. *God spoke once, says the Psalmist, and twice I have heard this, that Power belongeth unto God; also unto thee, O Lord, is Mercy, for thou renderest to every Man according to his Work. And the Son of Sirach, The way of Sinners is made plain with Stones, but at the end thereof is the pit of Hell. And St. Paul yet more plainly and fully; Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for whatsoever a Man soweth, that shall he also reap: For he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap Corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.* Here then is the universal Rule, and this is what we have to trust to; that Men are to expect Good for Good, and Evil for Evil; and to perswade our selves otherwise, and so depend upon irregular and extraordinary Methods in our favour, is no better than thinking to mock God, and a most wretched cheating of our own selves.

Psal 62.  
11, 12.

Ecclus.  
21, 10.

Gal. 6. 7,  
8.

But

But however, God hath not bound himself up so strictly by this general Rule neither, that he should not still be at Liberty, as oft he sees fit, to give the Privilege of Repentance, and Pardon, to some particular Persons, even at the last gasp. God is not barred, I say, by his own Law; so as that he may not do this. But wretched is the Condition of that Soul, which hath no other Anchor of Hope, nothing left to determine her Eternal Happiness or Misery, but this very doubtful and ticklish Point; the bare Presumption, that what he may do in some Cases, he will certainly do in this Case. I call it a doubtful and ticklish Point, because indeed all sober and pious Christians, have constantly spoken and thought very dubiously, concerning it. And, though they do not absolutely declare against a late and death-bed Repentance, but leave it to the secret Judgment of God; as a Matter not safe, or possible, for Man to pass a positive Sentence upon; yet they manifestly incline to the Negative side of the Question, and they bring such Arguments for their Opinion, as must convince any reasonable Man, that it is by no means fit to betake our selves to this last Remedy, when we have so many better, and more in our Hands.

This is, without Dispute, (as a learned *Casuiſt* begins his Disquisition upon it) a Matter that ministers more ground of Fear to the Party concerned, than it does of doubt to the Divine, who undertakes to handle the Point. *Res est* Sect. 22.  
*qua plus timoris, quàm dubitationis affert.* Two l. 4. Sent.  
 Conclusions the same Author lays down there q. 19. art.  
 which cannot reasonably be contested. The First 6.  
 is, that according to the Promise made by God in Ezekiel, *At what time ſoever a Man turns truly* Ezek. 18.  
 H h 4 10 27.

*to God, from the wickedness that he hath committed, he shall be graciously accepted, and pardoned. And not only so, but he admits farther, that so long as God spares a Man his Life, and the use of his Senses, it is not impossible, but that his Will may be so assisted and powerfully wrought upon by God's Grace, that he may truly repent. But then he qualifies this Conclusion with a Second, which takes away all Ground of carnal Security; Which is, that the late Repentance of a Man, who hath wilfully driven it off to the very end of his Life, is by no means fit to be depended upon; nor can it yield any great assurance of Pardon, especially to People, whose lives, for the general Course of them, have been notoriously bad, except there be a very great and extraordinary Sorrow, and some very evident marks of the Sincerity of such a Repentance.*

The Reasons of this seemingly hard Sentence are obvious. For such Men's Sins are loaded with very grievous Circumstances; They have by Custom and Obstinacy, heaped up to themselves an incredible quantity of Wrath and Vengeance; They have lived in defiance of God, and his Laws despised his Threatnings and Promises, set at nought his Anger, abused his Patience, that waited long, and defeated his Goodness, that used great variety of excellent Arts for their Amendment; They have by these means rendred themselves altogether unworthy of, and unqualified for that Grace, which is indispensably necessary to their Conversion. And therefore, all these things considered, there is a great deal of Reason to question, whether the appearances of Repentance at such a time, be real, or but a shew and empty Appearance only: Whether the Sorrow they express be truly

truly sorrow for Sin, for having offended God, and behaved themselves, as they ought not; or, whether it be the Sorrow of a hardened Malefactor; dragged to Execution, who hath no manner of Concern for the breach of the Laws, or the Injustice of his Fact, but only for the Punishment, which he is just going to suffer for it.

To the same effect another celebrated Divine says, "It is not easy to conceive, how that Repentance which comes so late as a Death-bed, should be true Repentance. For, when our Body, through every part is upon the Rack with Pain, it is not easy for a Man to command his Thoughts off from his Anguish to any other Object. So that this kind of Conversion seems rather to be the effect of Force, than of free Choice. And, though a Man in that Condition may think himself sincerely desirous to forsake his Sins, yet is it an easy matter, even for the Party concerned, to be deceived in this Matter; and to imagine that very Thing to be want of Will, which is in truth no more than want of Power. He will be Wicked no longer, only because he cannot. But, on the other side, Things within our Power are a proper Test to prove the bent of our Hearts; For if we do not that, which we might do, this is a plain Demonstration that we have not the Will to do it. Thus that Author makes it a very questionable Thing, whether a Death-bed Repentance be voluntary or constrained, which is but in other Words to doubt, whether it be barely possible, for such to be accepted, and available for Pardon.

Hug. de S.  
Vitt. de  
Sacr. L. 2.  
p. 14 c. 5.

Observe St. *Augustin's* Advice to the same purpose. "When your last Sickness shall seize upon  
Aug. Ser.  
48 ad Frat.  
in Eremito.

“ upon your Vitals, O how hard will you find  
“ it to repent, and be sorry for the Evils you  
“ have done, and should not, and the Good  
“ you might and ought to have done, but did  
“ not ! And what do you think will make it so  
“ much harder then, than at any other time ?  
“ This, no doubt, that the main strefs of your  
“ Mind will be determined to that part, whi-  
“ ther the main of your Grief draws it. And be  
“ well assured a world of Obstructions will in-  
“ terpose, and take you off from the Work of  
“ Repentance, in that Season of Pain and Lan-  
“ guishing. Your Body will be full of Torture ;  
“ Weakness and Decay will grow upon you  
“ every Minute ; Death will approach with his  
“ gasty Form, and fill your Soul with Terror :  
“ The Family will be crowding about to do  
“ their last Offices. And, What a lamentable  
“ Look will Fathers cast at those Children, who  
“ have been always particularly dear, and per-  
“ haps for the inordinate Love of whom, they  
“ have abandoned themselves to the World all  
“ their Days, and are now moving towards  
“ Hell upon their account ? When the Wife sits  
“ weeping by the Bed-side, and Friends stand  
“ round comforting you, and these and the  
“ Man’s own Inclinations flattering with Hopes  
“ of Recovery, and Phisicians encouraging those  
“ Hopes, how easy will it be for the Devil to  
“ dissuade him from Repentance ! Dost thou  
“ attend, Christian, to what I tell thee ? De-  
“ pend upon it, if thou dost not, thy own sad  
“ Experience shall shortly convince thee, that  
“ it is even so. Let me then prevail with thee,  
“ to set about Repeatance immediately, and  
“ make thy Peace with God or ever thou be  
“ Sick. Set thy House in order, make thy Will,  
“ dif-

“ dispatch all thy Affairs of Consequence,  
“ while thou hast Health and Leisure, while  
“ thou canst act without Confusion, while thy  
“ Senses are perfect, and thou art thy own  
“ Man. And happy sure are they who take this  
Good Advice.

Another, pressing the same Counsel, after a long and pathetic Exhortation, concludes in Terms that ought to strike Terror, into all that delay this necessary Work. “ He that

Isidor. de  
Sum. Bo-  
no. cap. 13.

“ leads a wicked Life, and will not think of  
“ Repentance till he is in danger of Death; As  
“ his Case with regard to Damnation is dan-  
“ gerous to the last Degree, so is his Pardon  
“ doubtful. The only way to be sure of  
“ Pardon, when a Man dies, is to Repent while  
“ he is in full Health. Some are too hasty in  
“ promising Security upon any the least Signs  
“ of Repentance; but these are such, as the  
“ Lord complains of by his Prophet Jeremy,  
“ *They have healed the Hurt of the Daughter of my*  
“ *People slightly, saying Peace, Peace, when there*  
“ *is no Peace.* Thus he insinuates, that a Death-  
“ Bed Repentance cannot be sure of Pardon;  
because we cannot be sure, whether it be true  
and sufficient Repentance, or not.

To which we may add two other Reasons of considerable weight. *First*, that, though we could be certain of God's Acceptance at our last Hour, yet would it be a great indignity to trust to that, since God created us, not to Sin and then ask forgiveness, but to *serve him in Righteousness and Holiness all the Days of our Life*: and consequently, they that lead a Wicked Life perform no part of that Business, which God made, and sent them into the World, for. *Secondly*, Since we cannot serve God in Holiness,  
nor

nor Love, and Honour him, as we ought otherwise, than by Repentance and Good Works, This Conversion lays so strict an Obligation upon our Consciences, that, every Hour we defer it, adds to the Degrees of our Guilt, and heaps fresh Wrath upon us. It is not necessary upon this occasion, to determine the precise Time, when this Obligation takes Place; but it is most evident, it must needs oblige us sooner than the Approach of Death. Since he who defers it thus long, must of necessity aggravate and multiply his own Offences; treasure up an infinite deal of Vengeance against himself, lose all the Occasions of exercising Holy Graces and Good Works, defeat the intent of his Creation, enjoy no Benefit of being a Christian, and make himself daily more and more a Vessel of Wrath, and fitted for Destruction.

In a just detestation of such Obstinacy and unworthy proceeding with Almighty God, St. Cyprian pronounces that severe Sentence. "That  
 " *such as* do not give proof of their Repentance,  
 " by testifying their Grief for having offended  
 " from the very bottom of their Hearts, and  
 " openly bewailing the Scandal their Misdemeanours have given, should not be received into  
 " Communion, nor reconciled to the Church,  
 " if these marks of their Sorrow were not  
 " antecedent to their Sickness and Danger  
 " of Death; Because this is not an Act of  
 " free remorse, but a matter of Terror and  
 " Constraint; And it is by no means fit, that  
 " he should receive Comfort when he comes to  
 " die, who never thought of Death, till he was  
 " just upon the Brink of it. And, though the rigour of this Judgment hath been somewhat moderated in the Practice of the Church, yet it  
 shows

Cypr.  
 Epist. 55.  
 Edit. Ox.  
 on

shews us what a very mean Opinion Holy Men heretofore had of a Death-bed Repentance; and how doubtful they were of its success. St. *Augustin* particularly says, that a *Sick Man's Repentance is like himself, feeble and Sick; and that of a dying Man, he fears is but dead and ineffectual.* Serm. 57.  
de Temp. And again, *That Man is very far from a true Believer, who stays till Old Age, before he will be prevailed upon to repent and become a new Man.* And how ought this to move us, how to disarm us of all our false Confidences, if Faith, the very first and fundamental Principle of a Christian, be not allowed to them that defer their Conversion to the latter part of their Days?

But you will ask perhaps, What is to be done then, when a Man finds himself reduced to his last Shifts, and not yet reconciled to God? Must he lie down, and despair, and is there nothing left, no refuge for this Wretch to flee to? To this I answer, That he must do what he can, he must not despair even then, but remember what Ch. I. I have already delivered in the beginning of this Second Book; Let him reflect, that the Mercies of God are infinite; let him sue and most vehemently importune him for Pardon; let him call in the Assistance of his spiritual Guides; and let his Diligence, and Zeal be the greater, in Proportion as his Neglect and Impenitence have been longer; for if even then his Repentance be hearty and sincere, there is no doubt, but God will accept it. For you may plainly see, that all the difficulty the Authors already cited make, relates to the sincerity of a late Repentance, and the impossibility of being fully satisfied in such Circumstances, that it is true Repentance. Which point because I know no body that hath stated more nicely than St. *Augustin*,

I



I will here set down his Resolution of it at large.

Hom. 41  
et 50.

“ Every true Penitent ( says he ) that repents and then dies, loosed from the Bonds of that Captivity which separated him from Christ, rests in Peace. But if a Man, in the extremity of Sickness professes to repent, and depart in the Peace of the Church ; I must own to you, we cannot deny him that reconciliation he desires, and yet we do not presume neither, that such a one dies in a safe Condition. We do not presume it ; I tell you plainly. A true Believer, that hath led a Good Life, dies in safety ; A Man that dies immediately after his Baptism, dies in safety. He that repents, and is reconciled in time of Health, and manifests his integrity by a course of holy Conversation afterwards, is safe when he dies. But he, that puts off his Repentance and Reconciliation to the last, though he have all the formalities of a Reconciliation, I am not sure, that he dies in a safe Condition. Where I am sure I, speak plainly, and give security ; but where I am not, though I give Men Reconciliation to the Church, I give them no security of Peace, with God. But here perhaps it may be said, *If you that are a Priest cannot tell, what State a Man, who repents at his Death only, is in after Death, nor can assure such of Salvation, teach us, I beseech you, how we must live after Repentance, to be sure of dying in a safe Condition.* I tell you how. Abstain from Drunkenness, from fleshly Lusts, from Robbery and Injustice, from Lying and Evil-speaking, from inordinate Mirth, and from all those Words, which Men must give an account for in the Day of  
“ Judg-

“ Judgment. Some of these I fear are made no  
“ great Conscience of, and yet they are all  
“ esteemed great in the sight of God, and de-  
“ structive to the Persons who commit them.  
“ These Things the Man must not only avoid,  
“ from the time of his last Reconciliation, but  
“ before, in his full Health: For if he drive it  
“ off to the last, he cannot tell, whether God will  
“ allow him space for Repentance and Reconcili-  
“ ation, or not. Therefore a Man should live  
“ well before, and better after, his Repentance  
“ and Reconciliation. ---- Observe what I say,  
“ for perhaps I shall do well to explain my self  
“ yet more particularly for fear of being misun-  
“ der stood. What then? Do I pronounce that  
“ Man damned who repents at his death only?  
“ No, I do not. Do I then declare him saved?  
“ No, not that neither. What then? I confess  
“ I know nothing, presume nothing, promise  
“ nothing, in so doubtful and hazardous a Case.  
“ He that would put this Matter past a Doubt,  
“ must repent in time of Youth and Health. If  
“ this be done, and the Change made, and thou  
“ feel the Day of Death approaching, trim  
“ thy Lamp, make ready for thy Passage, re-  
“ ceive the blessed Sacrament, and do the Of-  
“ fices of a pious Christian, and thus thou art  
“ certainly safe. And why safe for this? Why  
“ for that very Reason, because thou didst Re-  
“ pent at a time, when thou mightst have sin-  
“ ned on longer. But if thou Repent then on-  
“ ly, when thou canst Sin no longer, thou dost  
“ not forsake Sin, but Sin forsakes thee. But  
“ you will ask how I know whether God will  
“ forgive a Man at the last Hour or no? You  
“ put the Question well; I do not know. For  
“ if I knew that Absolution, and the Sacra-  
“ ment

"ment would do a Man no manner of Good  
 "at his last Hour, I would not give it him.  
 "And on the other hand, if I thought these  
 "alone sufficient to secure his Salvation, I  
 "would not warn, and terrify you in the solemn  
 "manner that I do. Either God Pardons such  
 "a Man or he does not; that one of these Two  
 "shall be I know, but whether of the Two  
 "shall be I do not know. And therefore a  
 "Wise Man in this Case would Repent while  
 "he may be sure of safety, lay hold on the  
 "Certainty, and have nothing to do with the  
 "uncertainty.

And now, let but any Man, that calls himself  
 a Man, or a Christian, consider this one Point.  
 If the Danger and the Dubiousness of a late  
 Repentance be so great, upon supposition, that  
 a Man do then Repent; What, can we think;  
 must needs become of all those Wretches, who  
 have not either Time, or not Ability, or not  
 Inclination, or not Means, or not Grace to  
 Repent at all, when that dismal Hour overtakes  
 them? What a horrible Thing is it to be cut  
 off suddenly, to be struck Dumb with a Palsy,  
 or senseless in Apoplex, or frantick in a raging  
 Fever? to be abandoned by God, and continue  
 raving, and blaspheming, and plainly wedded  
 to Vice, to the very last Gasps? In comparison  
 of these a Death-bed Penitent's Case is happy:  
 And yet, you see, All we can say for that  
 is, that we may Hope, but cannot Promise;  
 But, for the rest; We are so far from being able  
 to promise, that the Gospel affords not the least  
 Foundation, even for Hope, or charitable Belief.

I leave this whole Discourse upon my Reader,  
 with those Words of *Solomon*, which, it  
 were much to be wished, were graven in deep  
 in-

indelible Characters, in the Memory and Heart of every Sinner. For sure it must awaken him out of his profound Sleep to hear Almighty God threatening him after this manner, and startle him to think, how he shall bear the Accomplishment of this Prophetick Curse upon him in his greatest Extremity; *Because I have called, and ye refused, I have stretched out my Hand, and no Man regarded; I also will Laugh at your Calamity, I will mock when your Fear cometh. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me, O may we never be found among the Number of those, whom God will one Day thus upbraid, and even Triumph and take Delight in their Ruine; but make hast to seek him while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near. For whose bawkeneth to him, shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of Evil.*

Prov. i. 24,  
26, 28.

v. 33.

### SECT III.

*Some Examples of Persons, who perished in their Impenitence, and Pious Exhortations to speedy Repentance.*

**I**T is hard to say, what will prevail upon those hardened Wretches, who are not moved with the Arguments already urged. And yet it is not fit, any thing should be left unattempted, for the removing so general and so fatal an Obstruction, as this of delaying Repentance is, to Mens everlasting Salvation. I shall therefore, before I dismiss this Subject, try to make some profitable Impression upon the Souls seduced by it, by representing the dismal Judgments of God upon some Impenitent Wretches, and

the affectionate Exhortations of Holy Men to a timely and effectual Repentance.

- As to what respects the former of these Particulars, I shall confine my self to such Examples, as the Holy Ghost hath, for our warning, left upon Record in Scripture ; and these too such, as had, all of them, very loud and awakening calls from God. *Herod the First* had such a Call by the Wisemen, who came out of the East to *Jerusalem*, in search for the Messiah, the new-born King of the Jews ; but he was so far from hearkning to it, as, by a most barbarous Murder, of abundance of innocent Babes, to endeavour the Destruction of that wonderful Child, whom he ought indeed to have paid that Worship and Homage to, which he treacherously pretended to design. And for this obstinate cruelty God punished him with a very sad and unusual kind of Death. *Herod the Tetrarch* had sufficient warning given him by *John Baptist*, whose Preaching was so powerful, that it found a Passage to his Heart ; he heard him gladly, he did many Things in obedience to his Doctrine ; but when the sinful Cohabitation with his Brother's Wife, came to be urged home upon his Conscience, this cost the Preacher his Head. And he again who was desirous to see Christ, and some Miracle done by him, when this ended in reviling and setting him at nought, was cast off by Almighty God, and that opportunity of conversion turned to his heavier Condemnation. What an opportunity of Conviction, and Repentance, did God put into *Pilate's* Hands, had he but been so happy to make a Good use of it ? He understood our Saviour's Innocence, and, by his own Examinations and Conferences with him, was fully satisfied in his own Breast, that he
- Mat. 2.
- Mark. 6.
- Luk. 23.
- Mat. 27.

he was a very extraordinary Person: He had warning from his Wife, not to have any Thing to do with the Blood of that just Person, and declared to the People, more than once, that he ought not to condemn him: and yet, in despite of all these Checks, he stifled all the Impressions made upon his own Breast, gave up Him to the Barbarity of his Enemies, to whom he ought to have given up his own corrupt Heart; and was afterwards made an exemplary Sufferer, for that Popularity and Ambition, which had swayed him in crucifying our Blessed Lord, against the clear Testimony of his own Conscience, and his own Mouth. *Felix*, one of his Successors in the Government of *Judea*, sent often for *St. Paul*, when he was his Prisoner, and conferred secretly with him, concerning the Faith of Christ: The Apostle knew very well, what sort of Application this Man's Disease required, and therefore took an Opportunity to discourse one Day very particularly, upon *Righteousness*, *Ast. 24.*  
*and Temperance, and Judgment to come*; But he, like the Persons we are now dealing with, was not for making present riddance, but sent off the Preacher, and the Admonitions and Reproaches of his own Mind, till some more convenient Season; which Season never came, and so the Matter was of no effect. How happy had *Pharaoh* been, if he had prosecuted those Relentings, which his Heart often smote him with for his Wickedness? But, after all his Humiliations to *Moses*, in the bitterness of his Distress, after so many Warnings and Confessions, and Protestations, *The Lord is Righteous, and I and my People are wicked*; no sooner was the Plague removed, but he was for gaining more time, till at last the Vengeance of God glorified it self

upon this hardned Dilatory Sinner ; Who, the longer he lived, grew so much the worse, that he might be ripe at last for Judgment without Mercy, who had so often, and so obstinately stood out Proof against all the Methods of Mercy, ( whether by way of Punishment or of Deliverance ) which were made use of to soften and to reclaim him. Thus you find it was, in those Two most remarkable Judgments so often mentioned by our Blessed Saviour, the Destruction of the old World by a Flood ; and that of *Sodom and Gomorrah* by Fire from Heaven. Neither wanted Calls and Warnings, nor space for Amendment ; To the former, God gave a Hundred and Twenty Years notice ; to the other, the Reproofs and Instructions of righteous *Lot*. But still *they Eat, they Drank, they Married, and were given in Marriage*, till the Flood in one Case, and the Fire in the other, swept them away to a sad Eternity. And thus again it was, in that other dismal overthrow, so often foretold by our Lord upon *Jerusalem*, and the Jewish Nation ; never was such a Calamity upon any Nation under Heaven : And why was this ? But, as I hinted before, because God had stretcht forth his Hands all Day to a Disobedient and gainsaying People ; he would have gathered them, and they would not ; therefore their House is left unto them desolate.

By all these, and by many more, instances, we may see, that God deals with all Mankind, as himself declares in the Revelation, *Behold I stand at the Door and knock* ; but if we will not open, what follows then ? No other, than that Curse upon the Idolatrous Church, *I gave her space to Repent, and she would not Repent ; Therefore shall she be cast into great Tribulation*. He promises

Rev. 3.

Rev. 2.

mises to knock and call ; but he does not limit himself to any time, nor tell us how often he will call, or how long he will continue knocking. Nay, even the Punishments inflicted for our obstinacy in this World, are so many fresh Knocks, and louder Calls ; For it is a Favour, and a Privilege, to suffer here, rather than to be turned over to the Divine Justice hereafter. And therefore, when we pity those that smart under the Rod of God, for their Offences in Sicknes, or Poverty, or any other Temporal Afflictions ; let us remember, how much worse it is with the Prosperous and Gay Sinner ; With them, who are given over to a Reprobate Sense ; With them, who are cut off in the midst of their Wickedness, who might all have saved themselves, had they not shifted off their Conversion, but taken up Good Resolutions presently, and effectually, when they felt the Good Motions of the Holy Spirit awakening and importuning them to do so.

I now proceed to the *Second* Thing proposed, to lay before my Reader some of those pious Exhortations to a timely Repentance, which Holy Men in all Ages, have left behind them to this purpose. The first of these shall be taken from *S. Basil*, who observes, “ That this is the great Artifice of our Adversary the Devil, to persuade us to devote to Day to his Service, and to Morrow to God’s. And, when that Morrow comes, and is the present Day, he repeats the same Perswasion, upon the same Ground, because it is the present : Till at last Death overtakes us in stead of that fantastical *To Morrow*, which we had designed for the Season of our Repentance. And, in another place, pressing a speedy return to God, “ Let the last Day, ( says he ) be ever before thy Eyes ;

De Baptism.

Ad Fil. Spirit.



“ When thou risest in the Morning, be not secure  
 “ of living till Night ; and when thou lyeest  
 “ down in thy Bed, depend not upon seeing an-  
 “ other Morning. For who knows what a Day  
 “ may bring forth ?

Conf. l. 8.  
 c. 5.

St. *Austin*, whose own Experience had convinced him of the fallacy of these delays, speaks of the Matter very feelingly ; He confesses that there was no end of his answering *By and by*, and therefore he broke off all his Pretences, of *I come to Morrow*, and manfully resolved upon coming that very Instant, the Comfort of which Resolution he describes in very tender Expressions. “ How sweet, O Lord, did I find it to

Conf. l. 9.  
 c. 4.

“ abandon those Pleasures, which I once thought  
 “ it impossible to be easy without ? Thou didst  
 “ cast them out, O true and perfect Sweetness,  
 “ and didst enter in their stead, who art sweeter  
 “ than all Pleasures, even Pleasure in the Ab-  
 “ stract, and Sweetness it self. This of his own  
 Case, and to others he addresses himself thus.

In Psal.  
 102.

“ What was ever so Patient and Long-Suffering,  
 “ what so full of Goodness, as the Method of Al-  
 “ mighty God’s Proceedings with Sinners ! Men  
 “ offend God, and yet they are suffered to live ;  
 “ They multiply their Offences, against him,  
 “ and yet he prolongs their Days ; They Blas-  
 “ pheme his Majesty, and deny his Providence,  
 “ and yet he causes his Sun to shine, and his Rain  
 “ to fall, upon the Evil as well as the Good.  
 “ He calls them every way to amendment  
 “ by lengthening out the space of Repen-  
 “ tance, by Good Sermons, Good Books, Good  
 “ Advice, by secret Checks and Motions, by  
 “ the Rod of Correction, by Comforts, and En-  
 “ couragements. Oh how sweet, how wonder-  
 “ ful is the Patience and Mercy of this Good  
 “ God ! But take heed O Man, that thou abuse  
 “ not

"not this Goodness. He designs by this to bring  
 "thee to a Change of Life; And still thou cryest,  
 "*It is no matter to Day, to Morrow I will consider*  
 "of it; and when to Morrow comes, *Well, 'tis*  
 "*time enough yet, another Day will do as well;* and  
 "thus thou triflest away the Day of Grace, till  
 "the Wrath of God rush upon thee unawares,  
 "and thou perish by his Justice, whose Kind-  
 "ness thou hast despised. The same Author  
 applies the parable of the Labourers hired into  
 the Vineyard, to the different Seasons and Me-  
 thods of calling Men into God's Service, some  
 are taken in in their Infancy, some in their  
 Youth, some again, in their more confirmed  
 Years, some in Old Age, and others just at  
 the end of their Lives. "Hearken then, says  
 "he, my Brethren I beseech you, and let none  
 "of you loiter, or delay his coming into the  
 "Vineyard, upon a pretence, that, let him come  
 "when he will, the Penny shall be Good to him.  
 "For, though it be true, that every Labourer  
 "shall have his Hire, yet will not this bear any  
 "Man out in declining to labour, did any of those  
 "who were called at the First and Third Hours,  
 "bid the Husband-Man wait for them till the  
 "Sixth, or Ninth, or Eleventh? Come there-  
 "fore as soon as thou art called, because thou  
 "knowest the Reward is promised to all, but  
 "all are not promised to be taken in, when  
 "they please. If thou art called at the Sixth  
 "Hour, make hast, for thou canst not tell, whe-  
 "ther thou shalt live to the Seventh. For why  
 "shouldst thou put off the Householder that calls  
 "thee, since thou art sure of the Reward upon  
 "thy compliance, but not sure that he will al-  
 "low thee another Hour to come in at? Take  
 "heed then lest, by delay, thou deprive thy

De reb.  
 Dom. ap.  
 Joan. Scr.  
 59.

"self of that Recompence, which his Promise  
 "hath given thee a Title to, provided thou  
 "come when thou art called. And a little af-  
 ter he answers that excuse which the negligent  
 and idle are used to frame to themselves from  
 that Passage in *Ezekiel*, that *At what time soever*  
*a Man shall turn from his Wickedness he shall save his*  
*Soul alive.* "If God will be merciful at any  
 "time, says the Worldling, why may not I as  
 "well be converted to Morrow as to Day? No,  
 "says *St. Augustin*, Thou sayst thou wilt put an  
 "end to thy Wickedness to Morrow, but how  
 "art thou assured, that God will not put an end  
 "to thy Life before to Morrow? Thou hast rea-  
 "son in taking Comfort, that God hath promi-  
 "sed thee Forgiveness, whenever thou shalt Re-  
 "pent; but hath God any where promised, that  
 "he will give thee longer time to Repent in?  
 "The Wise-man advises to *make no tarrying*  
*to turn unto the Lord, and not to put off from Day*  
*to Day, because Wrath as well as Mercy are from*  
*him, and he will destroy Sinners in their Security.*  
 "Let not thy delay then shut that Door against  
 "thee, which God hath opened. Behold the  
 "Giver of Pardon opens to thee, and wilt thou  
 "not come in? Thou shouldst have thought it  
 "a mighty Mercy, if he had opened, when thou  
 "hadst knock'd, but he hath opened without  
 "thy knocking, and wilt thou still remain with-  
 "out? The Scripture says, *Do not say to thy*  
*Neighbour go, and come again, and to Morrow I will*  
*give thee, when thou hast it by thee.* We must  
 "not delay Mercy to others, and shall we be  
 "guilty of the cruellest delay to our selves? We  
 "must not defer our Alms, and shall we defer  
 "the Pardon of our Sins? Be merciful to thy  
 "own Soul, Man, and do not put off when thou  
 "hast

Eccus. 5.  
 5, 6.

Prov. 3. 28.

“ hast it by thee. Nay here thou needest not,  
 “ thou dost not give thy own, it is only requir-  
 “ ed, that thou do not refuse what is offered ;  
 “ the best and greatest Charity ; remission of all  
 “ thy Offences, which by speedy Repentance,  
 “ thou mayst give to thy needy Soul, but by un-  
 “ kind delays thou wilt certainly lose and eva-  
 “ cuate. And sure that Man is very barbarous  
 to himself, upon whom this Argument makes no  
 Impression.

I shall enlarge a little more upon the Danger  
 of this delay, by considering with *St. Gregory*,  
 how Sins unrepented draw Men into Perdition.  
 For, as *Seneca* hath very judiciously observed,  
 there is this remarkable Difference, between  
 the Sickneses of the Soul, and those of the Body :  
 That the Bodily, the greater they are, the more  
 painful and sensible they are ; But those of the  
 Mind, the greater they are, the less they are  
 felt, and complained of : Because it is the Na-  
 ture of these Diseases to stupify the Man, and  
 abate the sense of his Danger : So that habitual  
 Sinners by degrees come to be so hardned, as in  
 time to commit the blackest and most notorious  
 Crimes, without any scruple or remorse of  
 Conscience at all. And how this comes to pass,  
 not only from the nature of the Thing, but by  
 the just Judgment of Almighty God, *St. Gregory*  
 hath informed us by the following Passage.  
 “ Every Sin which is not speedily purged by Moral. 1.  
 “ Repentance, is either the Cause, or the Pu- 25. c. 9.  
 “ nishment of another Sin. For every unre-  
 “ pented Sin does naturally, and as it were by  
 “ its own weight, draw us down into the Com-  
 “ mission of another ; and so, is not only a Sin  
 “ it self, but the Cause of a following Sin, and  
 “ that following Sin again so caused by the  
 “ First,

“ First, is not only a Sin it self, but the Punish-  
 “ ment of the former Sin. It being just and  
 “ usual with God so to harden, and to blind,  
 “ the Heart of a Sinner, that, by the demerit  
 “ of one Sin he is permitted to fall into ano-  
 “ ther, and so to bind Sin upon Sin. And, as  
 “ the foregoing Sin is usually from Malice and  
 “ Obstinacy, so the latter proceeds often from  
 “ Ignorance and Insensibility, inflicted as a Pu-  
 “ nishment of the forgoing. Now in regard  
 “ that in the former of these, which is both a  
 “ Sin and the cause of Sin, the Man acted in  
 “ contradiction to his Knowledge and Consci-  
 “ ence : In the latter which are Sins, and the  
 “ Punishment of Sins, God permits him to lose  
 “ the Light of Knowledge, and the Remorse of  
 “ Conscience, which by Transgressing against  
 “ before, he hath provoked God to conceal  
 “ from him that Precipice, into which he is  
 “ now falling unwittingly, because he would  
 “ not avoid it, when his Eyes were open, and  
 “ he did see it before. That so Sin may be pu-  
 “ nished with Sin, and by the most dreadful of  
 “ all Judgments, be made both the Increase,  
 “ and the Scourge of it self. To this effect the  
 “ Apostle takes Notice of the Jews continuing  
 “ in their Obstinacy and Cruelty, that *they*  
 “ *might fill up their Sins alway* ; and our Lord in  
 “ his Indignation says, *he that is unjust, let him*  
 “ *be unjust still, and he that is filthy let him be filthy*  
 “ *still*. These Men then, who defer their Re-  
 “ pentance, have already given God Provoca-  
 “ tion sufficient to damn them ; but yet their  
 “ Sin is suffered to grow, that they may receive  
 “ the greater Damnation. Their first Sin which  
 “ was the cause of Sin, deserved Punishment ;  
 “ but God does not punish presently, that, if  
 “ they

1 Thes.

2. 16.

Rev. 22.

2.

“ they will not take warning, their following  
 “ Sins, which are Punishments of the former, may  
 “ add to the Number of their Stripes, and  
 “ mighty Sinners may be mightily Tormented.

St. *Augustine* once more expostulates the  
 Case thus ; “ You will say perhaps, I am but  
 “ young yet, and therefore I will indulge my  
 “ self in Pleasure for a while, and after that I  
 “ will repent. Which is just as if a Man should  
 “ say; I will run a Sword through my Body,  
 “ and then send for a Surgeon to cure me.  
 “ Alas! poor Wretch, little dost thou think,  
 “ that a Wound is received in an instant, which  
 “ cannot be healed but by long time, and acute  
 “ Pain, and the Part scarce ever restored to its  
 “ primitive Strength again. When a Man then  
 “ commits a grievous Sin upon purpose, or ra-  
 “ ther Presumption of repenting afterwards,  
 “ Why does he not reflect upon the many Dis-  
 “ eases, the many, ( even despised ) Accidents,  
 “ that may come between and cut him off by a  
 “ sudden unexpected Death, and make his Tem-  
 “ poral delay to involve him in everlasting Dam-  
 “ nation? There are two Extremes, by which  
 Men are injurious to the Justice and the Mer-  
 cy of God, both which God hath taken suffici-  
 ent care to prevent. “ To the intent Despair  
 “ might harden no Man in a wicked Course,  
 “ he hath marked out to us the sure Port of Par-  
 “ don and Mercy for all Penitents to make to.  
 “ And, that none might delay this Repentance  
 “ by Presumption, he hath made the Day of  
 “ every Man’s Death uncertain : Thus are both  
 “ Inconveniences provided against, the sorrow-  
 “ ful Sinner comforted, and the Negligent and  
 “ Dilatory terrified. Do not then despair,  
 “ because thou art promised Forgiveness ; But  
 “ do

De ho-  
 nest, mu-  
 leur,

In Psal.  
 102.

“ do not be secure neither, because God hath  
 “ not promised, that he, who delays his Re-  
 “ pentance, shall live to be forgiven. Some  
 “ Men sin by want, and others by Excess of  
 “ Hope; Both are in dangerous Circumstances.  
 “ Wo to them that despair! Wo to them that  
 “ presume! Wo to both! Because both neg-  
 “ lect to repent. God is Master of his own  
 “ time and favours; now he calls, now he im-  
 “ portunes, now he waits for thy Conversion;  
 “ but if thou slip this time, and weary out his  
 “ Patience; the season of Judgment approach-  
 “ es, and then will he render unto thee accord-  
 “ ing to thy evil Deeds. There were no end  
 indeed of representing to my Reader all that  
 might be collected upon this Occasion. But, I  
 hope, that little in comparison, which he finds  
 here will, both for the weight of the Reasons,  
 and the Authority of the Persons, have so much  
 Credit with him, as to put him upon speedy  
 Amendment, without which he runs so mani-  
 fest a hazard of his own Salvation.

## CH A P. VII.

*Some other Obstructions to Holy Resolution.*  
*Sloth, Negligence, and hardness of Heart.*

**W**ERE it possible to descend into the Hearts  
 of wicked Men, and discern all the  
 lurking Corruptions there, many Impediments  
 no doubt might be discovered, which have not;  
 and some which could not be, particularly in-  
 sisted upon in this Treatise. And happy were  
 it for my Reader, if all the hindrances in so im-  
 portant an Affair, could be distinctly handled;  
 because

because to Persons of Probity, and an ingenuous Temper, it happens very often, that the very Knowledge of the Disease is a great step towards the Cure. But *Three* there are however, mentioned in the Title of this Chapter, too manifest to escape Observation, and of so great affinity, that I cannot think it improper to treat of them together.

## SECT. I.

## Of Sloth.

**T**HE *First* of these is Sloth. A great and common hindrance, especially to tender and delicate People, who have long used themselves to, or been educated in Ease and Idleness: And therefore these tell you, they are not cut out for taking Pains, or enduring Hardship, though their Inclinations to Religion, if you please to believe them, are as good, and as sincere as any Persons whatsoever. These Men will make no difficulty to own, that all which hath been, or can be said upon this Occasion is true; And they wish with all their Hearts, they were in a Condition to practise it. But alas! They have a nice Constitution, and very imperfect Health, Fasting, and Praying, and going constantly to Church, are things their Bodies cannot bear; and the Time, which others employ in these Holy Exercises, they must be content to give to Indulgence, and Diversion, to Plays and Company; For, should they abridge themselves of these Recreations, they should be quite devoured with Melancholy, and lose all the comfort of Life. And therefore, since they cannot do what they would, they



they make no doubt, but God will accept their good Desires, and not require Performances, of which they are not capable.

To such as these I would recommend a serious Consideration of these few Passages in Scripture. *The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing, but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat. The desire of the slothful killeth him, for his hands refuse to labour. He coveteth greedily all the day long; but the righteous doth good and ceaseth not. The slothful man saith there is a Lion in the way, I shall be slain in the streets. Thou wicked and slothful Servant, thou knowest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: Thou oughtest therefore to have put my Money to the Exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with Usury. Take therefore the Talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten Talents; and cast ye the unprofitable Servant into outer darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of Teeth. The Fig-tree which our Blessed Lord found full of Leaves without Fruit, is the Emblem of good Desires and Intentions without effect. And they who resemble it in this Condition, will as certainly be one Day partakers in its Curse.*

Prov. 13.  
4. & 21.  
25, 26. &  
22. 13.

Mat. 25.  
26, 27,  
28, 30.

Mat. 21.

From this evil Disposition proceed many very pernicious Qualities and Effects. Such as, that Spiritual Drowsiness of Mind, which our Saviour commands all his Disciples to shake off when he calls upon them to *Watch and Pray*; and St. Paul, when he rouses his *Ephesians*, with that allusion to *Isaiah's* Prophecy, *Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee Light*. And yet this Heaviness is not such an universal Stupidity neither, but that their Apprehensions can be as quick, and their

Endeavours as active upon the Affairs of this World, as those of other Men. Like the ungrateful Wretches in the Parable, they are intent upon their Farms, and their Yokes of Oxen, and can talk as shrewdly, and manage as providently upon these Occasions, as one would wish; But if you come to argue with them upon the Subject of Salvation, and urge them to Industry, in securing an Inheritance Eternal in the Heavens; This is all lost upon them. They have no Ears to hear, but are in a Dream as it were, This is a sort of Employment much against the Grain, and they who submit to any Trouble, though never so laborious, for temporal Advantages, think none too little, or too late, for such as are everlasting. And thus they doze and trifle out their Lives, till at last the Doom read by Solomon overtakes these spiritual Drones too.

*How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep? Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep; so shall thy Poverty come, as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed Man.* Prov. 6. 9, 10, 11.

A Second ill Effect of this Sloth, hinted at already, is an unreasonable fear of taking Pains, and a representing to ones self Matters more difficult and impracticable, than in reality they are. These like the Persons spoken of by the Psalmist, *axe afraid there, where no fear is*: They frame to themselves frightful Images of the Service of Almighty God, the insupportable Hardships attending it, and the Dangers and Inconveniences it would expose them to. As that, Fasting would ruin their Constitution; Going to Church would give them Colds; Receiving the Sacrament would restrain them from all the Liberties, that give a relish to Conversation; taking

Pfal. 100.  
& 32.

taking an account of their Sins frequently; would kill them with Sorrow, and perpetual Dissatisfaction. And a thousand other extravagant Pretences there are, alledged against that Service, which in truth is perfect Freedom; And in prejudice to him, who commands Men to *serve him with gladness*, and bids the *righteous be of a merry heart*. All which are in truth but so many fantastical *Lions* in the way, excuses contrived to cover that Sloth, which first puts Men upon inventing them.

A *Third* unhappy Effect of this Temper is Cowardice, and being discouraged with every little rub Men find in the way of Virtue. Which is so contrary to that Bravery and Magnanimity required of good Men, that nothing can more indispose them for the perfection of a Christian Obedience. And yet, to see the perverseness of Humane Nature, these very People are not beaten off from Vice, by the much greater Inconveniences that attend it. When yet, it is even demonstrable, that the Ways of Piety are the less rugged of the too: And all the Difficulties, which Almighty God hath thought fit to encumber our Duty with, that so he might put us upon giving some Proofs, that we love him, when we choose to do and endure some things ungrateful to Flesh and Blood for his sake, are much more tolerable, than the heavy Burden we voluntarily load our selves with, by continuing in the Habits, and under the Dominion of Sin. All the Sufferings of self-denial subduing and governing our Passions, not being comparable to the Torment of living under the Tyranny of any One of them.

The *Fourth* Effect I shall mention is, that listlessness, and unsteadiness of Mind, which drives  
Men

Men off from going effectually about even those very things, which they profess to be satisfied in, and to intend, and resolve upon. And thus we see Multitudes, that talk much of amending their Lives; and sometimes consult their spiritual Guides in the Case, and pretend to receive their Directions with a great deal of Zeal, and go away highly satisfied, and yet after all this, do nothing. This is very elegantly expressed by Solomon, *As a door turneth upon his Hinges, so doth the slothful upon his Bed.* He is sometimes in Motion, but like that Door he only moves backwards and forwards, makes no advance, nor stirs from his Place, but is, after all, just where he was at first. He cannot find in his Heart to do even the easiest Things, no not upon the most necessary Occasions. For that seems to be the importance of that other Observation made by the same Author, *A slothful man hideth his hand in his bosom, and will not so much as bring it to his mouth.* Prov. 16.  
14.  
Prov. 19.  
24.

Many other very detestable Effects of this vicious Disposition might be instanced in; but I have singled out these, because they are the most effectual Bar to Holy Resolutions, and a vigorous Piety. For, what good is possible to be done upon a Wretch, that is sunk into such a stupid Insensibility, as not to receive any impressions from all that can be urged to him concerning his Soul and a future State? What can be expected from a fanciful timorous Creature, who stumbles at every Straw, and scares himself with imaginary Dangers and Difficulties, which have no Being, but what his own sick Brain gives them? What possibility is there of bringing such to run the Course, to fight the Fight, to be at pains about reducing their inordinate

Lusts and Appetites into subjection, and to beat down the strong holds of Sin and Satan; who are so miserably irresolute, so scandalously lazy, as never to bear any the most profitable, the most necessary Trouble, or so much as to be consistent with their own Thoughts and Intentions, one poor half Day together?

If there be any way left to take off this horrible hindrance to Salvation and a good Life, I should think it must be, by prevailing with these Men, to reflect seriously upon the Labours and Sufferings sustained by the Son of God for their sakes; upon the indefatigable Pains of the Apostles, and other eminent Saints; upon the earnest Exhortations addrest to every Christian to give all diligence to make his calling and election sure; to work out his Salvation with fear and trembling; to take earnest heed, lest a promise being made us of entering into God's rest, any of us should come short of it; upon the terrible Threatnings denounced against them, who refuse to qualify themselves, and think the Benefits of the Gospel not worth their Pains; upon the Nature of our present Condition; a Condition of Tryal and Discipline, and Warfare, and consequently such as requires labour, and fatigue, suffering and hard striving, in them who hope to obtain the Crown; upon the Glories and Advantages of that Crown it self, and the inexpressible, the insupportable Misery of them, who basely give out, and lose it through their own Default. And lastly, that these Men would consider, that no Life of any sort can be without some Trouble, that they would fairly compute, and balance the present Inconveniences of a sinful Life, against the lighter weight of Cares and Troubles attending a good one: But especially, that they would

2 Pet. 1.

10.

Phil. 2.

12.

Hcb. 4. 1.

would think a little, how these Bodies of theirs pretended to be too tender for the Duties of Religion here, will be able to dwell with everlasting Burnings, and be tormented beyond all Measure hereafter.

All this is an Argument calculated for their own Principle, and perswades them to spare themselves, to consult their own ease, and by a short (a very short) industrious and active Care, to make sure Provision for a durable, an ever-during Rest. For this Life is the time allowed us to secure Heaven in, and by the several Parabolical Allusions in Scripture, 'tis therefore termed, the Market to buy in, the Battle to combat in, the Winter to sow our Corn in, the Day to work in. He that loses this Market, can never retrieve it more; He that shrinks in this Battle, is disgraced for ever, and treated as a Deserter; He that lets this Seed-time slip, must want in Harvest, and beg when there shall be none to give to him; He that Works not the Works of him that sent him while it is Day, shall be cast into utter Darknes. Suffer me then to apply to these Sluggards, that advice of the Wise Man's, in a more exalted and spiritual Sense, and may they receive it as a necessary Admonition, how all those must behave themselves in this, who hope to escape Misery and the very extremity of Want and Discomfort in the next World. *Go to my Son, and deliver thy self; give not sleep to thy Eyes, nor slumber to thy Eyelids; devour thy self as a Roe from the hand of the Hunter, and as a Bird from the snare of the Fowler. Go to the Ant thou sluggard, consider her ways and be wise; which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provideth her meat in the Summer, and gathereth her food in the Harvest.*

## SECT. II.

## Of Negligence.

**I** Now proceed to the *Second* Obstruction, mentioned in the Title of this Chapter, by which I understand something more than that Word, in its common Acceptation, is used to denote. For under the Character of *Negligent* I comprehend all those People, who, how great soever their Care and Application in other Matters may be, are yet absolutely void of all this, in Matters pertaining to God and Religion; and though they attend very diligently to the Affairs of the World, yet allow Heaven and the Salvation of their Souls, the least, if any Place at all in their Thoughts. Such are those *Epicures* mentioned by St. Paul, of whom he told his *Philippians* even weeping: *Whose end is destruction, whose God is their Belly, who mind earthly things:* And heartily, to be wished it were, that this Description did not present us with too lively an Image, of Multitudes, who call themselves Christians at this Day. Such again, those practical Atheists mentioned by the same Apostle, in another of his Epistles, *whose very mind and conscience is defiled; who profess that they know God, but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.*

Phil. 3.

Tit. 1. 15,  
16.

They do not perhaps fly out into that Degree of Hardiness, as openly to impugn the Being and Providence of God, but are desirous to be reckoned among Believers: And yet, to a Man, who examines their Actions, it is manifest they are not such at the Bottom. Their Lives are so notorious, so direct a Contradiction to all those

Attributes

Attributes and Excellencies, which every one who believes a God must suppose to be in him, that we may truly call those Men Infidels, by Interpretation, and necessary Consequence, at least: For, how shall they pass for Men possess'd with any serious Sense, of the infinite Wisdom and Knowledge of God, who are not afraid of committing any Sin, provided it can be covered from the Eyes of Men? Or of his Providence and Care of all the Affairs of this World, who neither trust him in Danger, nor flee to him in Distress, nor stick at any Methods, though never so offensive to him, never so contrary to what he hath engaged himself to Bless, to compass their Designs? Or of his Justice and a Judgment to come, and the Rewards and Punishments of a future State, who take no care to appease his Anger, to provide for that dreadful Day of reckoning, to qualify themselves for that Happiness, or to avoid those unspeakable Miseries which the Holy Ghost so often, and so expressly declares shall then be the everlasting Portion of the Righteous and the Wicked respectively? Men may be as large, and as solemn, in these Professions as they please, but there is no other way of proving themselves in good earnest, except that of making their Lives bear Testimony to the Sincerity of those Professions.

Of this kind again I esteem them, whom some have thought aimed at by those Ordinances in the Jewish Law, which prohibited the plowing Deut 22. with an Ox and an Ass, and the wearing Garments of Linnen and Woollen mixt together; for so in effect do those *lukewarm* Christians, Rev. 3. whom God expresses such a Detestation of, for being *neither hot, nor cold*. Men, I mean, who count the search after Truth a matter needless,



1 Pet. 3.  
15.

and of no Consequence ; and are perfectly indifferent what sort of Principles they entertain. As if the Grounds of Religion were to be remitted to the Men of Learning and Leisure ; and the being always *ready to give a reason of the hope that is in us*, were a Precept confined to our Teachers only. These Men of Latitude comfort themselves with the many Errours, and unhappy Disputes, that have given disturbance to Religion ; and rest upon this Excuse, for their Carelessness in the Point of settling their own Mind, that it is of no great Consequence how a Man believes, for an honest Man of any Perswasion, may go to Heaven. This indeed is an Opinion rarely fitted for their Purpose, because it leaves them at Liberty to accommodate themselves to any Company, or any Change. No Tyrant's Command ; no Errours imposed by publick Authority can ever come amiss to them. All Discourse of Religion they look upon as Canting ; Eating and Drinking, and vain Mirth, News, and Play, and the like, are their constant Entertainment ; but for God and his Ways, the very Heathens themselves do not consider them less, than these Men seem to do. And can we now with any Propriety of Speech call these Men Christians, or Believers ? Does not our Blessed Saviour make this a Rule of judging, *By their fruits ye shall know them* ? Does he not lay it down as a certain Maxim, that *Out of the abundance of the Heart, the Mouth speaketh* ? And again, that *where the Treasure is, there will the Heart be also* ?

Mat. 7. 20.

Mat. 12.

34.

Mat. 6. 20.

If then the Fruits of these Trees are so corrupt, shall we say of the Trees themselves that they are Good ? When their whole Conversation is made up of Vanity, and all their Designs terminate entirely upon the Delights and Advantages  
of

of Sense and this Present Life, shall we be so absurd, to think, that either their Heart or their Treasure is in Heaven? Or may we not rather apply to such the Description of the *Ephesians*, in their yet unconverted State, that *they are Strangers from the Covenant of Promise, having no hope, and without God in the World.* Eph. 2. 12.

This is indeed a very general Obstruction, and several Causes might be assigned, which either give Birth, or at least increase and Encouragement, to it. But these Two are in a more obvious and especial manner observable to contribute to it. The *First* is that unhappy difference of several contending Parties and Opinions in Religion; which by the multitude and intricacy of Disputes upon controverted and less necessary Points, and by the sharpness and uncharitable Management of those engaged in them, tempt Men to suspect that Victory and Fame, rather than Truth and the Honour of God, is the Prize they contend for; weary Men out in these perplexed Enquiries, till at last they grow to a disesteem of Religion in general: And, because they find Persons of great Learning and Judgment disagree in some abstruse Points, take up with that most unreasonable Inference, that they can arrive at certainty in none.

A *Second* Thing accessory to this Impediment is, Inordinate Love of the World, which naturally draws Men off from the Love of God; Mar. 6. 24. nay, even works them up to a Hatred of, and Enmity against, him; As both our Blessed Lord, and St. *James* have informed us: So that we are not to wonder, if from thenceforward Jam. 4. they feel no sensible Delight in his Ways, nor retain any very moving Impressions of him upon their Minds. And these Persons are very hard to

be reclaimed indeed; both, because they are sunk into so great a Degree of Spiritual Insensibility, as stifles and suppresses any vigorous Thoughts of Amendment; and because they shun the proper Means of their Cure. For what Hope can we conceive of that Patient, whose Case is desperate without Advice, and yet is so far from following Prescriptions, that he will not bear so much as to hear of a Physician, nor allow any body to talk to him of his Danger or his Disease? These Men then must needs be allowed to be in very sad Circumstances, who will not be brought to any Sense of their own Condition; but while they are perswaded, that they are much wiser than their Neighbours, take it for an Affront to be told of their Folly.

And yet, This is what they must be told of, before any Good can be done upon them. And, would they be prevailed upon to suffer the Word of Exhortation, the properest Method of doing them Service, would be, to lay open their Sickneſs and the danger of it, by giving them to understand, how very distant a Tempter they are of, from the true Spirit of the Christian Religion; and consequently from all the hope of Happiness, which they vainly cherish in themselves, as belonging to them, merely for professing themselves to be Christians. God requires that we should *love him with all our Heart, with all our Mind, with all our Soul, and with all our Strength.* This is the first and great Commandment, a Commandment common to the Law and Gospel both, a Commandment of Eternal Obligation, and the great Foundation of Morality, of Natural, as well as Revealed, Religion. And, how far are these careless People from coming up to this Duty, who allow God so little Room

Mat. 22.  
Deut. 6.

in their Hearts, and employ so small a part of their Thoughts, or their Strength, in his Service? God commands us to study and to meditate upon his Law, to make it the Subject of our Thoughts and Discourse, Night and Day, at Home and Abroad, early and late; And, how many Hours, how many Days, pass these Wretches, without so much as one serious Reflection upon this Matter? Can they, who scarce ever bestow one poor Thought upon Christ, or what he hath done and suffered, what he came to teach, and what to purchase for them, can these Men be called Christians? They say, they believe in God, and serve him, but are they to be credited, who use all possible means to drive him out of their Minds; and, when temporal Obligations, or Decency, or some other Respect, foreign to Religion, engages them in Exercises, of Devotion, account it a Weariness and a Burden, to hear his Word, to pray to him to receive his Blessed Sacrament, or to do any of those Things, which they who are Christians indeed, most gladly embrace the Opportunities of, and esteem the greatest Privilege and Blessing that mortal Men are capable of on this side Heaven?

Christ himself hath taught us, what proportion of our Value the Affairs and Enjoyments of this World deserve, and how far they ought to be from coming into Competition with those of another. *Thou art cumbered*, says he to *Martha*, Luk. 10.  
*about many Things; But there is one Thing needful;*  
 And by the Context it is plain, beyond all dispute, that the *one Thing* meant there is a diligent attendance upon the service of God. But, The Men, of whom I am now treating, find many other Things necessary, and this not so at all, St. John forbids us to *love the World, or the Things*, Joh. 2.  
*that* 15.

- that are in the World; and they love nothing but the World, and the Things that are in it. St. James declares every Friend to the World, an enemy to God; and they think all Men their Enemies, who are not Friends to the World. Christ orders us to Pray always, and not to faint; These Men seldom or never apply themselves to God at all in this holy Duty. St. Paul would not have
- Jam. 4. *James declares every Friend to the World, an enemy to God; and they think all Men their Enemies, who are not Friends to the World. Christ orders us to Pray always, and not to faint; These Men seldom or never apply themselves to God at all in this holy Duty. St. Paul would not have*
- Luk. 18. & 21. *Formication, nor Uncleanness, nor Covetousness, nor Filthiness, nor foolish Talking, nor scurrilous Jestings, once named among Christians; as Things altogether unbecoming the Conversation of Saints; And yet the Practice and Conversation of these Men is chiefly made up of this abominable mixture. St. Peter bids us be Vigilant, be Sober; and St. Paul, to be fervent in Spirit, and continuing instant in Supplication, and all good Works; And these Persons are the very Reverse of all this, Careless and Remiss, Heavy and Insensible, Perverse and Inflexible, Contemning and Abhorring all those Duties, that tend to the mortifying of their Passions, and the true Service of their Crucified Saviour. What part then have these Men in the Lot or Portion of Christians, but the empty Name only? And how little that is like to profit them in their greatest Extremity, our Lord hath given them sufficient warning; by saying, not only that, Not every one that saith unto him Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but many, who had a great deal more to alledge for themselves, than a bare calling him Lord; Even prophesying in his Name, and casting out Devils, and doing many wonderful Works, these shall be excluded that place of Bliss too, whither nothing can prevail for admittance, but that one indispensable condition, The doing the Will of his Father which is in Heaven.*
- Eph. 5. *Formication, nor Uncleanness, nor Covetousness, nor Filthiness, nor foolish Talking, nor scurrilous Jestings, once named among Christians; as Things altogether unbecoming the Conversation of Saints; And yet the Practice and Conversation of these Men is chiefly made up of this abominable mixture. St. Peter bids us be Vigilant, be Sober; and St. Paul, to be fervent in Spirit, and continuing instant in Supplication, and all good Works; And these Persons are the very Reverse of all this, Careless and Remiss, Heavy and Insensible, Perverse and Inflexible, Contemning and Abhorring all those Duties, that tend to the mortifying of their Passions, and the true Service of their Crucified Saviour. What part then have these Men in the Lot or Portion of Christians, but the empty Name only? And how little that is like to profit them in their greatest Extremity, our Lord hath given them sufficient warning; by saying, not only that, Not every one that saith unto him Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but many, who had a great deal more to alledge for themselves, than a bare calling him Lord; Even prophesying in his Name, and casting out Devils, and doing many wonderful Works, these shall be excluded that place of Bliss too, whither nothing can prevail for admittance, but that one indispensable condition, The doing the Will of his Father which is in Heaven.*
- I Pet. 5. *St. Peter bids us be Vigilant, be Sober; and St. Paul, to be fervent in Spirit, and continuing instant in Supplication, and all good Works; And these Persons are the very Reverse of all this, Careless and Remiss, Heavy and Insensible, Perverse and Inflexible, Contemning and Abhorring all those Duties, that tend to the mortifying of their Passions, and the true Service of their Crucified Saviour. What part then have these Men in the Lot or Portion of Christians, but the empty Name only? And how little that is like to profit them in their greatest Extremity, our Lord hath given them sufficient warning; by saying, not only that, Not every one that saith unto him Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but many, who had a great deal more to alledge for themselves, than a bare calling him Lord; Even prophesying in his Name, and casting out Devils, and doing many wonderful Works, these shall be excluded that place of Bliss too, whither nothing can prevail for admittance, but that one indispensable condition, The doing the Will of his Father which is in Heaven.*
- Rom. 12. *And these Persons are the very Reverse of all this, Careless and Remiss, Heavy and Insensible, Perverse and Inflexible, Contemning and Abhorring all those Duties, that tend to the mortifying of their Passions, and the true Service of their Crucified Saviour. What part then have these Men in the Lot or Portion of Christians, but the empty Name only? And how little that is like to profit them in their greatest Extremity, our Lord hath given them sufficient warning; by saying, not only that, Not every one that saith unto him Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but many, who had a great deal more to alledge for themselves, than a bare calling him Lord; Even prophesying in his Name, and casting out Devils, and doing many wonderful Works, these shall be excluded that place of Bliss too, whither nothing can prevail for admittance, but that one indispensable condition, The doing the Will of his Father which is in Heaven.*
- Mat. 7. 21, 22. *Not every one that saith unto him Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but many, who had a great deal more to alledge for themselves, than a bare calling him Lord; Even prophesying in his Name, and casting out Devils, and doing many wonderful Works, these shall be excluded that place of Bliss too, whither nothing can prevail for admittance, but that one indispensable condition, The doing the Will of his Father which is in Heaven.*

And this is sufficient to shew, how great and dangerous an Obstruction, this Supine, and senseless Negligence is, against that Holy Resolution, which I am pressing all my Readers to. For, if Christ, as is evident, both from the positive Precepts, and parabolical Allusions in the New Testament, if he, I say, require, that every one, who in good earnest pretends to be his Disciple, should be so vigorous and so perfect in this Resolution, as, from the instant he is convinced how rich a Treasure is hid in this Field, to go and sell all that he hath, and purchase it; that is, in plain Terms, If it be a Christian's Duty, to prefer the pursuit of those Designs, which aim at the Kingdom of Heaven, before all the Business, and Pleasures, and Enjoyments of this Life, of what kind soever they be; and rather venture all, than fail in this one Point: If Christ I say, require us, as he evidently does, to save our Souls and serve him at any rate, and out of Hand; then, what shall become of those Men, or when can we ever hope to bring them to this Temper, who are so far from taking Heaven by Violence, that they will not even accept it, when offered, and in a manner thrust upon them? So unlikely to part with their All and buy this Treasure, that they cannot be prevailed with to part with even their Superfluities, for the Relief of Christ in his needy Members? So unlikely to come up to the Price, at which the Gospel hath set it, that they do not care so much as to treat about the purchase; but are sick of that Man, and his Conversation, who comes in Friendship and Duty, to make Proposals, and persuade them to this gainful Bargain?

That such is the Temper of too too many, daily Experience does but too sadly convince us; and, till they fall into some better way for changing

ing their Disposition, to spare an unnecessary Enlargement here, I would entreat them to read attentively those Chapters in the *First* Part of this Book, which give an Account of the Reasons and Purposes, for which we were created and sent into this World, and likewise of that reckoning, which God will most certainly call us to for the time we spend here. This, it is to be hoped, may in some good Degree awaken them out of this Spiritual Lethargy, and convince them, that however dissolute, and wicked People may sleep securely, yet their Damnation slumbreth not. And consequently, that there cannot possibly be any Condition more dangerous than that Man's, who bends his Mind, and endeavours wholly to vanity and trifle in effect, (for such all the Matters, quite beside the Purposes, for which he was sent into the World :) and in the mean while passes over his main Business, as if it were a Thing only by the By: Who will not be perswaded to lend one serious Thought, to that which is most Necessary, most Important, most Advantageous; that which requires and deserves his whole Study and Care; and, without which all other Study and Care will only tend to render him more miserable more inexcusable.

## S E C T. III.

*Hardness of Heart.*

**T**HIS is the last Obstruction I shall speak to, and by it I mean, that Evil Affection of Mind, mentioned by St. *Paul* in the Second to the *Romans*, and occurring in sundry other Passages of Holy Scripture. By which, when compared together, we shall find to be meant, such an obstinate  
and

Rom. 2. 5.



and pertinacious Spirit, as settles it self resolutely, never to give Ground, nor to move out of the present Evil Way, it hath taken to, whatever is, or can possibly be said to perswade a Change. And this I reserved for my last Particular, because it is indeed the last, and highest pitch of Wickedness. It includes, and exceeds all the Impediments that went before, and adds to all the rest a wilfulness and malicious Purpose, directly opposite to that Godly Resolution, which I have been all this while labouring to gain Men over to.

This Hardness of Heart admits of different Degrees, and we plainly find different sorts of Persons affected with it; Some in a much more dangerous and raging; Others in a lower and more treatable manner. But some there are, who have got up to that highest and most impenetrable pitch of Obduration, that, though they know and consider, they do amiss, though they see, and believe, and remember perfectly that they who do such things, act against the plain and eternal Rules of Reason and Religion, and provoke God to Anger and severe Vengeance, yet come what will, they will have their Humour; and out of some Worldly or Sinful Respect or other, they persist in their Wicked Intentions, in despite of all that can be urged by others, or by their own Consciences, to terrify or to divert them. An Example of this we have in *Pilate*, who, though he examined Jesus over and over, and as we may guess, would have been glad to find some colourable Pretence for his Sentence against him; though he was not only warned by his Wife, but fully satisfied in his own Conscience; though he declared publicly and solemnly, that no fault could be found



in him; yet still, rather than lose the Favour of the People, and incur the Censure of not being a Friend to *Cesar*, he condemned him to Death, and in so doing manifestly condemned himself of notorious Injustice. Such an Example we have likewise in *Pharaoh*, who, though he saw the Miracles of *Moses* and *Aaron*, and smarted under the mighty Hand of God in so many repeated Plagues upon himself and his Subjects; yet, rather than he would seem to be vanquished and forced at last to relent, persevered in his Malice, till at last he was utterly destroyed in his Wickedness. Such an Instance again we have in the Idolatrous Jews, who returned this, as their final and peremptory Answer to *Jeremiah*. *As for the Word, that thou hast spoken unto us in the name of the Lord, we will not hearken unto thee; But we will certainly do whatsoever thing goeth out of our own Mouth.* But alas! we need not go so far for Examples of this kind, every Age and Place is too full of them. All that set themselves to revile, and contemn, and persecute Religion and Good Men; All that endeavour to expose Innocence, and laugh Virtue out of the World; All that decline the Practice of it for fear of Derision, or the Imputation of Singularity, are evidently of this ungodly Temper, and seldom come off from it, till God himself cut them off in the midst of their Malice and Fury against him.

Others again there are, who, though they do not persist in their Wickedness directly against their own Knowledge, are yet but very little, if at all more excusable, than those that do. Such I mean, as will not know, nor be made sensible of their Danger, but, by an affected Ignorance of their Duty, labour to keep their Consciences quiet, and dread nothing so much, as that

Jer. 44.  
16, 17.

that Light, which may discover them to themselves, and bring them over to a better course. These are the persons, who, as Job observes, say Job 21.14. unto God, Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy Ways: and, of whom David tells us, that they are like the deaf Adder that stoppeth her Ears, which refuseth to hear the Voice of the Charmer, Psal. 58. 4. 5. charm he never so wisely. Where by the Charmer is meant the Holy Spirit of God, which by all possible Means labours to disengage Men from the bewitching Delusions of Sin; But, as another Prophet complains, They refuse to harken, and pull away the Shoulder, they stop their Ears, that they should not hear: yea they make their Hearts as an Adamant-Stone, lest they should hear the Lam, and the Words, which the Lord of Hosts hath sent in his Spirit by his Prophets. Zech. 7. 11, 12.

This grievous Sin is, upon all Occasions, charged upon the Jewish Nation. Ye will not come to me that ye might have Life. How often would I have gathered you, and you would not? says our blessed Saviour. And St. Stephen, Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in Heart and Ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: Meaning thereby, all the Messages sent by God, when those Servants and Ministers, in whom the Holy Ghost spake, came to teach them the Truth, and press'd them to amendment of Life; All those Miracles he wrought by those Men's Ministry for their Conviction; All the inward Checks and Holy Motions which he secretly breathed into their Hearts. And yet, notwithstanding the Opportunities of knowing God's Good Pleasure, notwithstanding the Testimonies he gave to the Truth, though they had nothing to object either against the Doctrine it self, or the Miracles that confirmed it, which could in Reason bear them out; they still resolved not to

to be won-over, but in stead of complying with what they could not contradict, they fell foul upon their Teachers, and all this, because as *Jeremy* says, *They had a revolting and rebellious Heart; and had made their Faces harder than a Rock.* And again, lamenting this inflexible Obstinacy, *Why* says he, *is this People slidden back by a perpetual backsliding? They hold fast deceit, they refuse to return; I hearkned and heard; but they spake not aright; no Man repented him of his Wickedness, saying, What have I done? Every one turned to his course, as the Horse rusheth into the Battel.* And the same Disposition is plainly intimated in all those kind Expostulations between God and his People, in the Eighteenth and Thirty Third of *Ezekiel*, *Why will ye die, O House of Israel? For I have no Pleasure in the Death of him that dyeth, wherefore turn your selves and live ye.* What could more expressly, more pathetically, lay their destruction at their own Door, than thus in effect to say, *Why will my People ruine themselves, when I have been so industrious, and am so vehemently desirous to save them? Why are they wilfully deaf to all my Instructions and Reproofs? so perversely bent upon Mischief, as not to learn how they may prevent it? so cruel to themselves, as not to be made sensible of their own Danger; That Danger, which they may avert, and which I, who tenderly love them, most passionately wish they would see in time, that so they might escape it?*

Imagine with thy self, Whoever thou art, that readest these passages, that God in them is addressing himself, not only to those Jews, but to many Thousands of ungracious Christians, and among them perhaps, to thy own self. For to thee he certainly speaks, if thou refuse his good Motions, and the other means  
of

of Grace afforded thee; if thou holdest out against his repeated Importunities, and be resolved to follow the Imaginations of thy own Heart, and to continue thy old vicious Customs, whatever the Consequence of these Things may be at last. And, God knows, there are but too many pretended Christians, that give occasion to be argued with after this Manner. They dare not read Good Books, nor hear Good Sermons, for fear of being convinced, that some Things are necessary to be done, which yet they have not the Heart to do: for fear their Consciences should be awakened with some powerful Truth, and not let them rest any more, till they have bid adieu to some darling Sin, or mortified some Passion, which they find great Delight in gratifying. How many, who have not the Confidence to speak it out, have yet this Language in their Hearts, that they *have made a Covenant with Death and are in League with Hell!* They are content to take what follows, provided they may enjoy the present without any disturbance; and therefore desire not to be interrupted with any vain Perswasions. These may do Good upon them who have not made their last Choice, but for their own parts they are fixed. Let others, who think Heaven worth their while, take it upon the Terms as it is promised, but they are at a Point, and all they covet now, is not to be disturbed with any new discoveries of their Danger; which they had rather suffer than see, and be made uneasy with Proposals, which they have already determined not to close with, for the preventing it.

What a marvelous infatuation is this, to affect to go to Hell with our Eyes shut, and how fitly compared to the Rage and Venom of Serpents?

pents? Of these the Prophet *Isaiah* says, that  
 Ma. 48. 4. *their Neck is an Iron Sinew, and their Brow is Brass.*  
 What can be more Emphatical to express the  
 hardness and impenetrability of the Metal?  
 Agreeable to which Representation is that of  
 St. Bernard. "A hard Heart, says he, is neither  
 "wounded by Compunction, nor softened by  
 L. i. de "Goodness, nor moved by Entreaties, nor bent  
 confid. ad "by Threatnings, nor at all made more gen-  
 Aug. c. 2. "tle, but more stiff rather and tough, by Cha-  
 "stisements. It is ungrateful for the Mercies  
 "of God, disobedient to his Commands, enra-  
 "ged by his Judgments, made wanton and pre-  
 "sumptuous by his Grace and Promises, lost to  
 "all sense of Shame, fool-hardy in Danger,  
 "rough and intractable in the Affairs of this  
 "World, insensible in those of another, for-  
 "getful of the Past, regardless of the Present,  
 "improvident for the Future.

And if this be a true account of the Disease,  
 where shall we be able to find a Remedy? What  
 can we do to mend it? Lay before such a one  
 the heinousness of his Sins he triumphs in; or at  
 least he is not mortified with the sad Spectacle.  
 Talk to him of the Reasonableness and the Ad-  
 vantages of Religion, the Folly and Danger of  
 a Wicked Life, he is Proof against all your Ar-  
 guments. Entreat him, importune him, nay  
 add Tears to your Prayers, he is not to be melt-  
 ed down at this rate. Tell him of the angry Ju-  
 stice of an avenging God, and the Torments of  
 Hell, he looks upon them, as a melancholick  
 Dream, and a painted Fire. If it please God to  
 scourge him with Afflictions, he is enraged, and  
 grows more furious and desperate than before.  
 If he invite him with Mercy and Kindness; he  
 is ungrateful, and considers not, that these lead

to

to Repentance. If you assure him of forgiveness upon his Reformation; This puts him upon turning God's Grace into Lasciviousness, and renders him Presumptuous and Secure. If you represent to him the Vileness of his own Behaviour; he is lost to all Shame. If you lay before him the Terrors of the Divine Vengeance; he is Proof against all Fear. In a Word, he regards not the Dispensations of Providence towards others, though they be most remarkable, either for the rewarding of eminent Virtue, or punishing outrageous Vice. And what way then is there left to do this Man Good, whom neither Precepts; nor Counsels; neither Mercies nor Punishments; neither his own nor other People's Prosperity or Adversity, will have any Influence upon?

From this Account of a hardned Heart, we plainly perceive, that when God declared he would harden the Heart of *Pharaoh*, he threatned that Punishment, as the dreadfulest Judgment, that could possibly be inflicted for his former Iniquities: And yet all this, in the true Acceptation of the Words, imported no more, than that God, by withdrawing his Grace, would suffer *Pharaoh* to persist in his Wickedness, and to harden his own Heart. And on the other Hand, when he promises a special Mercy, it is express'd in these Terms, that *he will take away from his People a stony Heart, and give unto them a Heart of Flesh*; that is, one tender and sensible, and such as shall be moved by Good Impressions. And there is no doubt to be made, but this is effectually the greatest and most valuable Blessing, that God does, at any Time bestow upon Mankind. To have such a Heart, as when it's natural Corruptions draw it aside,

Ezek. 36;

is quickly check'd and controlled; and, when the Remembrance of Sins recurs upon it, is deeply pierced and wounded with the Sense of its own Vileness and Ingratitude, and desperate Folly, and bleeds under the afflicting Remembrance, and is effectually excited to Repentance and Amendment. And, on the other hand, the heaviest Curse that can possibly befall any Christian, is to be given over to a Reprobate Sense, and a hard Heart; such as sins without any Remorse; and by doing so, heaps up a dreadful load of Vengeance to it self; such as St. Paul compares to the Ground which no Rain can soften, but is cursed, *and bearing nothing but Briars and Thorns, its end is to be burned.*

Heb. 6. 7.

And does not this account now furnish us with an excellent Reason, why the Holy Ghost should upon all occasions, speak so vehemently, and with such Detestation against this evil Disease; and warn Men so solemnly, and so frequently, that they be careful not to be corrupted by it? For where indeed could such Warmth and Affection be more properly employed, than in securing Men from a Distemper, that carries so many mortal Symptoms with it, and is but a very little on this side final Reprobation it self? To this purpose is that of St. Paul to the *Ephesians*, whom he warns against filthy and obscene Discourse, and some other infamous Practices which betray a profligate Mind, from this Argument particularly; *Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed to the Day of Redemption.* He likewise advises the *Thessalonians*, by no means to *quench the Spirit.* Now these Texts, though different in Form, yet in Substance come up to our present Subject. For the Spirit of God is then *quenched*, when our Wick-

Eph. 4 30.

1 Thes. 5  
12.

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edness stifles, and resists his holy Motions; and he is then *grieved*, when we continue obdurate, and persist in such dissolute Practices, as are an Affront and Dishonour; a declaring War against, and open defiance of, him.

Another passage there is, and a very solemn one, which does not only by Interpretation, but in express Terms come up to our Case. 'Tis that to the *Hebrews*, Take heed, Brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil Heart of Unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called to Day, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of Sin. What *Joshua* observes concerning a Temporal Judgment upon the Cities of *Canaan*, is very applicable and true, in a spiritual Signification, *It* Heb. 3.12. *was of the Lord to harden their Hearts, that he might destroy them utterly; for when God suffers Men to come into this Condition, they seem to be Persons quite given over, and marked out for Ruin. Hence are those Observations of the Wise-man, Happy is the Man that feareth alway,* Prov. 28. *but he that hardeneth his Heart shall fall into Mischiefs; and, He that being often reprov'd, hardeneth his Heart, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy. Hence is that Prayer of Solomon, Give* Prov 29 1. *therefore thy Servant an understanding Heart, that I may discern between Good and Evil. What we translate an Understanding, is in the Original, a Hearing Heart, that is, a tender and tractable Spirit, willing to be taught, and ready to receive Good Impressions. Such a one, as is described in that memorable Passage of Isaiah, To this Man will I look saith the Lord, even to him that* Is. 66.12. *is Poor and of a contrite Spirit, and trembleth at my Word.*



This then is the Temper, which God values highly, and requires we should be of. A meek, and gentle, and humble Spirit, a Heart full of contrition for offences past, and disposed to receive every Instruction and Reproof, every Promise and Threatning, with all that Reverence and Awe, which becomes the Word sent down to us from so great a Majesty. How then shall we escape, if we stand unconcerned, and pay no regard at all to so many Exhortations, to so many Warnings of our Danger, designed to awaken us, denouncing Wrath insupportable and everlasting Torments, against obstinate impenitence? How shall we dare to provoke the Displeasure of an Almighty Avenger? And yet this we manifestly do, if we defer our Holy Resolutions, and will not be perswaded to amend our Lives. A very small part of that which hath been said in this Treatise, might suffice to prevail upon a considerate and well-disposed Mind for speedy Reformation; But if the whole make no impression, nor promote these Good Purposes, my Reader hath a very hard and impenetrable Heart indeed: And all I can do more for such a one, is most humbly and earnestly to beseech him, in whose Hand the Hearts of all Men are, to soften him with the precious Blood of that only Son, and our only Saviour, who was content to shed it upon the Cross, for this very purpose, that he might *turn the Hearts of the disobedient to the Wisdom of the Just, and purify unto himself a peculiar People, zealous of Good Works.*

*The CONCLUSION.*

I Have, throughout this whole Treatise, confined my Discourse to such Arguments, as might move my Reader to this single Point of Holy Resolution only, without enlarging particularly upon the several Methods fit to be taken, for the entring upon, advancing in, and bringing to its just Perfection, a truly Christian Life. And this I did, upon a certain View, that when once this Resolution is vigorous and steadfast, a Mind so disposed will never be at a loss for proper ways of putting it in Execution. As also, being conscious to my self, how many excellent Books are extant and easy to be met with, and how ready the Blessed Spirit of God will be with his inward Assistances and Directions to forward and give success to the Pious Endeavours of all such, as diligently and conscientiously make use of those outward Helps, of which his gracious Providence hath provided so plentiful a Store. And though more, it is possible, might be said for this one Point, than either occurs in this, or can be comprehended in any Volume of a moderate Proportion, yet I cannot but be of Opinion, that either the Reasons alledged here may suffice; or else, that where they prove ineffectual, nothing will be sufficient for the vanquishing those Men's Obstinacy, and reducing them to the Obedience of that rightful Lord, from whom by Sin they have grievously revolted.

For here we see unanswerable Arguments for the Love and Service of Almighty God, and the effectual renouncing and irreconcilable detestation of Vice. We have evident Demonstra-

tion of a God that made us, and all the World; We are informed, for what End he created us, and that this was no other, than to glorify his Majesty by our Service; We are taught, wherein that Service required from us consists, and that God at present expects, and will accept no other, than the living in Obedience to the Commands of Christ, delivered in his Holy Gospel; We are told, what particular Qualifications are there set down, as distinguishing Characters of all the true Disciples of Jesus: We have had warning of that impartial Account, which God will one Day take of all our Actions; How wonderfully good to us he is in the mean while, how watchful over us, how solicitous to win us, how liberal in his Rewards if we do well, how severe and terrible in his Punishments if we continue Refractory; hath been at large explained.

And further yet, in regard the Tempter throws many Objections and Discouragements in our way, to beat us off from that Resolution, which effectually breaks his Yoke, and sets us free from his Tyranny, I have taken care to lay open the Vanity and Deceit of those Obstructions and Excuses. The unreasonableness of Despair, of the pretended Difficulties of a Holy Life, the false Flatteries of the World and its Allurements; are detected, and exposed: The Folly of presuming upon God's Mercy, if we persist in an evil Course; The Danger of delaying our Repentance, of Slothfulness in our great Affair, of Carelessness in matters relating to Religion and a future State, and lastly the almost desperate Condition of hard and Sorny Hearts, which are proof against all the Arts of Persuasion, and the Dispensations of Providence, is here at large de-

declared ; And these Rocks are now set in plain View, that no unwary Soul may split upon them, and make Shipwrack of Faith, and a good Conscience hereafter, for want of due Notice, where his Danger lies, and how it may be avoided. And what now can any Man in Reason desire more, to dispose him to a good Life ? What need can there be of other Arguments to deterr Men from Wickedness and Vice, than thus undeniably to prove, that they who persevere in it, do most assuredly deceive and destroy their own Souls ?

Do not then read this Book meerly for Diversion and Entertainment ; do not, when thou hast read it through, lay it aside without any farther Thought, and persist in thy vicious Customs as securely as before ; but remember it treateth of thy greatest Concern, and that thy Condemnation will be more certain, more heavy, if thou neglect and defeat these Motives to Repentance, than if they had never come within thy Knowledge, or been offered to thy Consideration at all. And how wilt thou escape, or who can have hopes of thee, if these Arguments are lost upon thee ? Dost thou think to go to Heaven without forsaking thy Sins ? That is impossible : Thou mayst as well imagine to banish the Holy God from thence, as to find a Place there for a polluted Conscience. Wilt thou then be content to forego Heaven, and yet at the same time hope to escape Hell ? Alas ! That is every whit as extravagant a Delusion as the former : Another Condition most certainly awaits thee, after thy Departure hence, and that Condition lyes all in Extremes, there is no middle State, between unspeakable Bliss and Glory, and everlasting Torture and Shame. Wilt thou then adjourn  
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the Thoughts of this Matter till some distant Day? Nay, but consider, Man, what hath been made out to thee upon this Point: That there is no likelihood of thy being either more able, or more willing, to repent at any time hereafter, and strong Presumptions, that thou wilt then feel thy self less so, than thou art now: If God's Grace be rejected at present, it is great odds, it will either not be offered, or if it be, that it will not meet with better Reception another time. The offers of this Grace are in the disposal of the Giver, and so are the Opportunities for using it too; and thou canst have no security, that thou shalt not be cut off from the Land of the Living, before the time, thus pretended to be fixed for thy Amendment comes. The only way then of doing this great Work effectually, is to do it presently.

Break away therefore from that Tyrant, that Usurper that wrongfully holds thee in Bondage; Shake off his Chains immediately, and cut his Bands in sunder; and throw thy self into the Protection of that Triumphant Saviour, whose Arms are always wide open to receive thee, and who by his marvellous Condescension to the Death of the Cross, *hath overcome him that had the power of Death, even the Devil.* Behold thou hast it in thy Power to add to the already unspeakable Joys of Heaven; the Conversion of a Sinner we are told will do it; O! make the Angels glad, and thy self happy; renew thy Covenant with God, by firm Resolutions of better Obedience, and dare to acquit thy self Manfully, as becomes a good Souldier of Jesus Christ: Imitate St. *Jerom's* Courage, and determine with thy own Heart, that neither Father nor Mother, neither the tenderest Affection, nor the most

Heb. 2.9.

Hier. ad  
Heliodor.

most vehement Importunities of any Relations or Friends upon Earth, neither Temptations nor Terrors, Prosperity or Adversity, shall keep thee one Moment longer from Christ; since no Calamity can be comparable to that of a Heart estranged from him, and no Duty to others ought to take Place, to the prejudice of the Duty thou owest to thy own Soul.

And oh! that there were in us all such a Heart, so resolute, so zealous, so fervent, in the Love and Service of our dearest Master and Redeemer: That we would now at least, bethink our selves, not be satisfied to feed upon Husks with Swine, any longer, when like that Image of all returning Sinners the Prodigal Son, we have assurance of being honourably received, affectionately and gladly entertained, and as well esteemed by our reconciled Father, as if we had never offended him at all. I call this an Assurance, for it is nothing less; since we have so many, so express, so solemn Declarations of his Readiness to forgive. His I say, who cannot lye, and who, whatever he promises, performs it to the uttermost. Return then I beseech you, and lay hold on those Promises, who never failed any, who cannot fail them that believe and depend upon them. Run while he calls, and slip not the time which can never be retrieved; for all the World, couldst thou possess it entire, would not make thee so happy, as this one Act of seasonable Compliance with the Invitations of thy God and Saviour: This would be the critical Moment, from which thou mightest date thy present Comforts, and everlasting Blessedness: And O! that it may please the Father of Mercies so to dispose thine, and mine, and every Christians Heart, to the Attainment of everlasting

lasting Salvation, that we may work the Works of him that sent us, while it is Day, before the Night come, wherein no Man can Work. Grant this we beseech the, O merciful Lord, for his sake, who came to call Sinners to Repentance, even thy Son our Saviour Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

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**THE END.**

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